



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Mainly dry

(IRAS) 40p

Comment

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and a murder
conspiracy page 14

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The return of
Jesus Christ
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The Tabloid

Bridget Jones:
more man
trouble

350 die as airliners collide

Agencies
New Delhi

Hundreds of charred bodies, many still burning, were strewn around a village west of New Delhi last night after a Saudi jumbo jet collided with a Kazak airliner in a massive explosion.

It was feared that 351 people had been killed in what would be the third-worst air crash ever and the worst mid-air collision.

The Indian Foreign Office said a British passenger was believed to have been aboard the Saudi plane. Another 15 foreigners were believed aboard — nine Nepalis, three Pakistanis, two Americans, a Bangladeshi, and a Saudi.

A report from Chandigarh, near the site of the disaster, said 200 charred bodies, including those of the pilots of the Saudi Boeing and one air hostess, had been found.

"About 200 bodies, most of them burned, were sighted at the spot, where relief and salvage operations were being hampered due to darkness," the Press Trust of India said.

Villagers near Charkhi Dadri, a town of 50,000 surrounded by flat farmland, said that the impact of the crash had created a 10ft-deep crater over an area of about 330 square feet at the site, about 50 miles

south-west of New Delhi. A building contractor Ranjan Chatterjee, chairman of the Airports Authority of India, told a news conference: "We have not heard of any survivors so far. It seems rather difficult, unfortunately." The PTO reported that three survivors were pulled from the wreckage but they had died on the way to hospital.

The collision between the 747 and the Kazak plane took place after nightfall. Saudi Airways flight SV763 took off from new Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport at 6.33pm bound for Dahrana and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It had 312 passengers and crew on board. The plane

was cleared to climb to 14,000ft. Seven minutes after take-off, it collided with the Kazak aircraft, flight KZ41907 from Shymkent, which was making its landing approach. The Kazak airliner had 39 people on board.

A Boeing spokesman in Everett, Washington, Doug Webb, said the 747-100 had been delivered to Saudi Airways in 1982. It was configured to carry 377 passengers. Mr Webb said he had no information on the plane's service record, whether it was equipped with crash-avoidance device or what may have caused the collision.

Until Friday's crash, the third-deadliest crash was the

1974 accident outside Paris involving a Turkish DC-10 which killed 346 people.

The Saudi airline's last disaster was in August 1990 when a Lockheed TriStar caught fire at Riyadh airport shortly before take-off. All 301 people aboard were killed.

Until yesterday's collision, India had been regarded as having good air-traffic-control systems.

"Pilots have been reasonably happy with conditions in India," said Tony Myers, administration and finance officer of the Surrey-based International Federation of Airline Pilots. "We have had no particular complaints about the area." There were areas where



pilots were deeply concerned about safety, but India was not one of them, said Chris Darke, general secretary of the British Airline Pilots' Association.

Further reports, page 9

Major goes into battle on Brussels 'dictatorship'

Anthony Bevins
and Sarah Helm

party of Brussels poodles. Mr Major said that unless the United Kingdom was exempted from the directive, and all further attempts at imposed "social engineering", he would veto the new European treaty currently being negotiated by the 15 member-states.

Mocking Mr Major's stance, Tony Blair told MPs: "Isn't this just back to beef, where, five months on, they've not even got the gelatine ban lifted?"

It was the old tactic, the Labour leader said. "They seize on an issue, they talk tough, they alienate everybody, and then they cave in. In the law which gives the right to people for a minimum holiday is not the issue upon which to launch Beef War Mark 2."

Liberal Democrat MP Mervyn Campbell said: "Britain will never influence Europe so long as it sits in its tent."

Two Euro-sceptics jumped at the chance to demand a further round of ESE-style non-cooperation, which was immediately ruled out by Mr Major. The most outspoken critic, Teresa Gorman, told *The Independent*: "The Prime Minister is in the position of the eunuch; he can't do anything. They have ways of making us conform."

From the other side of the Tory divide, Edwina Currie said: "Thumping the table in Europe is childish, petulant and useless. It makes our partners turn away in disgust and

they no longer listen to the serious points we make."

Deep scepticism was also shown in Brussels, where British officials immediately demanded an "opt-out" from the directive.

Almost as soon as the court's decision was delivered, Sir Stephen Wall, Britain's ambassador to the European Union, tabled proposals for the opt-out at a meeting of the inter-governmental conference (IGC), which is up-dating the Maastricht Treaty.

Sir Stephen also demanded that the new treaty should re-write health and safety powers, currently governed by majority voting, to allow a national

veto. The demands for a new working hours "opt-out", to extend the existing social chapter opt-out, and for a veto of further health and safety measures, are highly unlikely to be agreed by other European member states in their IGC talks — which are not scheduled to be concluded until next June.

As Mr Blair pointed out in the Commons, that "conveniently" followed an expected May election, which the Conservatives could lose.

Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, told the Commons: "This House should not seek to disobey the law. 'We obey the law until we can secure a change in it, and we are de-

termined to secure that change in the law through lawful means."

Mr Lang said earlier that the Government expected to take two to three months to consult business and industry about the implementation of the new law, which would then be speedily introduced, in a matter of weeks, by Statutory Instrument.

Underlining the importance of the battle, Mr Major sent a letter to Jacques Santer, the Commission President, and his 14 fellow-leaders, warning them of the fight ahead. "I attach the utmost importance to these amendments," he said, "and I shall insist that they form

part of the outcome of the inter-governmental conference."

A buoyant Padraig Flynn, European commissioner for social affairs, confirmed yesterday that the Commission is now planning to propose an extension of the working hours directive to workers currently exempted, including junior doctors, fishermen and transport workers.

Mr Flynn hit back at Mr Major, who has accused the Commission of bringing in the working hours measure through the "back door", saying Britain was now trying to "break down the door" by rewriting the treaty in the IGC.

Leading article, page 13



QUICKLY

Lending rate up
A million home-owners will have to pay more for their mortgages from next month following the decision of the Nationwide Building Society to raise its standard lending rate by 0.25 per cent to 6.75 per cent.

More guns money

The Government announced in the Commons increased compensation of up to £100m for gun owners of handguns to be lawfully issued after the Dunblane massacre.

IRA's bomb haul

Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch has said it is urgently trying to track down an IRA unit which is thought to have armed itself with bomb-making equipment or firearms during a raid on a series of self-storage units in West London. The IRA's haul is believed to have included Semtex.

Page 2

Bishop's tax call
An evangelical bishop called for tax allowances for families which would encourage parents to stay at home. The Bishop of Hull, the Rt Rev James Jones, said that the present system penalised parents. Page 7

Whips conspired to get Hamilton off the hook

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent



Dale Campbell-Savours:
suspects wider campaign

vestigation of the Hamilton affair.

Mr Willetts is accused of trying to pressure the chairman of the Members' Interest Committee but if the accusation by Mr Campbell-Savours is proved, it suggests there was a concerted attempt by the whips to sideline the inquiry.

He told Mr Willetts: "I put it to you that there was a deliberate, very effective effort made by the whips' office ... to try to influence this inquiry."

On the second day of the committee hearing evidence from Mr Willetts, Mr Campbell-Savours surprised the committee by producing a new memo allegedly written by Mr Mitchell.

Mr Campbell-Savours, MP for Workington, said the memo was written by Mr Mitchell following the publication of an article in *The Independent* on 24 October 1994 under the heading "Hamilton failed to defend himself".

In the article, the paper said that Mr Hamilton failed to declare in the register of MPs' interests a paid-for consultancy for a public relations firm with strong links to southern Africa.

The memorandum from Mr Mitchell, dated the same day, was headed "The Independent article on Hamilton" and is

addressed to the then Chief Whip, Richard Ryder. It said that Mr Mitchell had spoken to the Registrar of Members' Interests and "in confidence" he had been told that the decision on whether the committee would rule against Mr Hamilton for not registering the payment could go either way. "He [the Registrar] does not like it but there is no relevant past decision for them to refer back to."

Mr Mitchell described the Registrar's views as "not very helpful I am afraid".

Mr Campbell-Savours suggested that "there was a pattern of intense whip activity both on and off the committee. It does point to an attempt to try to influence the decision of the committee."

The committee will now discuss whether to call further witnesses into the affair and what action to take against Mr Willetts at its meeting next Monday.

Andrew Marr, page 15

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significant shorts

Irish minister faces renewed calls to quit

Ireland's justice minister, Nora Owen, was last night under growing pressure to quit as a scandal深ened over her department's failure to leave a judge hearing terrorist cases after he was technically retired and ineligible to sit on the bench.

Her position was further undermined when a series of prisoners, including suspected republicans facing explosives charges and extradition proceedings, were granted judicial review of the legality of their detention.

The Dail last night began a two-day confidence debate in the three-party coalition Government, forced by an Opposition no-confidence challenge to Ms Owen, the Attorney General, Dermot Gleeson, and the Taoiseach, John Bruton. Alan Mearns

Road attack man better

Police hope to be able to speak soon to Simon Willmett, who was critically injured when a concrete block was dropped through the windscreen of his car as he was driving along the M3 motorway in Hampshire.

The 22-year-old, from Bagshot, Surrey, who suffered severe chest injuries in the incident last month, has made such good progress that he was transferred yesterday from the Royal Brompton Hospital, London, to his local Frimley Park Hospital. Police are treating the incident as attempted murder.

No Coltrane in 'Cracker'

Granada has been commissioned to take *Cracker* to the US, but Robbie Coltrane will not be repeating his award-winning role. It is the first British production company to be commissioned by one of the big four US networks. The one-hour pilot episode begins filming in the spring for screening next year and 1998. Barrie Clement

Tanker pilot wins appeal over disaster

John Pearn, the Milford Haven pilot found guilty of incompetence after the tanker *St Empress* ran aground as it entered the west Wales port last February, spilling 70,000 tonnes of crude oil, had an appeal upheld yesterday, prompting criticism of the port authority and sparking a call for its chairman to resign.

To date, the disaster has cost the Pembrokeshire economy an estimated £1.5m, mainly in lost tourist revenue. A report by the Department of Transport's Marine Accident Investigation Branch is due to be published next year. Tony Heath

Paedophile priest jailed

A priest who sexually abused young boys, then described what he had done to other paedophiles via the Internet, was jailed for six years at Newcastle Upon Tyne Crown Court last night.

Father Adrian McLeish, 45, who showed no emotion throughout the day-long hearing, admitted 12 charges of indecency with boys under 14. He had also pleaded guilty to six charges of distributing indecent pictures of children under 16 by means of the Internet.

Breakthrough in post dispute

The threat to Christmas mail receded yesterday when leaders of 130,000 postal workers finally agreed a peace deal to end their long-running dispute over working practices.

Alan Johnson, joint general secretary of the Communication Workers' Union said he was confident his members would accept the peace formula in a ballot over the next few weeks.

As part of the proposed settlement, management has dropped its insistence on the introduction of "team-working" - the main bone of contention. Barrie Clement

Whipped to fury by spectre of the jackboot



DAVID AARONOVITCH

As you walk into the MPs' suite of offices at 7 Millbank the airlock doors hiss shut behind you. Then it's past the green copper bust of Sir Edward Heath, straight ahead, turn right, right again and into the meeting room that the eight former whips - the Praetorian Guard of Eurosophia - were using for their press conference about the latest judgment of the federalising European Court.

As I sat down, the young man in front of me was subjected to narrow-eyed questioning by one of the organisers: who was he working for?

You could see why there were grounds for suspicion. Blond-haired, blue-eyed and

tall, it was not difficult to imagine this chap - sporting a funny armband - singing "the future belongs to me" in a Bavarian biergarten.

Within minutes of the press conference ending he would be reporting to his controller at the German Embassy. "Heil Hitler!" they greet each other.

"Ah, Gerhard", the man with the duelling scar would say, "you are very pleased schweinhunde up to now?"

Then Gerhard would tell him that Nick Budget spoke of "betrayal" by Europe; John Wilkinson of Britain being "at the crossroads ... a satrap of a European Federal state"; Teddy Taylor of "democratic outrage" ("when will the breaking point come?"); Tony Marlow of "who governs Britain?"; St Teresa of Gormam of "the credibility of the Prime Minister"; Christopher Gill revealed that "all those on the continent want is to see the subjugation of our country".

"Der Teufel!" exclaims the scarred controller, his scamps

trembling in his gloved hand. "They have us go-rumpled. You are very planning to do?" And Gerhard, a humourless smile on his Teutonic lips, replies: "Actually, not a lot. They will support a government policy of non-cooperation with Europe, like over beef". They both laugh, merrily. And if Herr Major does not stick to his guns? Will they withdraw support?

Gerhard mutes his answer to this question. Like me, he will have heard Nick Budget say that the right will not withdraw. But he will also have overheard Richard Body mutter "not yet" and seen Teresa's face become like a Greek mask of tragedy, her mouth turned down in misery, and subcuta-

nous twitches and grimaces testifying to the torment within.

While the two Germans settled down to compose their report to Berlin, I went to see Act Two of the latest Euro-crisis played out at Prime Minister's Question Time.

Some of the latter battlefield flags that had been waved before the battle of Florence (where our obstinacy, if you recall, was to win the beef war) were held aloft again.

Under the shade, the Prime Minister said he would insist that the right demand was not prepared to allow, would have all progress unless. There would be no end to the IGC ("an endless IGC"), says Gerhard. "It sounds wonderful".

"I'm not going to accept this nonsense", said JM, in reply to Tony Blair. "I have written to the European Commission."

But why asked Sir David Steel, was he getting his knicker in such a twist? Had not Gillian Shephard in 1992 (when Employment Secretary) said of the working hours directive, "In a word we've won. The UK has secured all its key objectives"?

Al, Mr Major didn't say, but much has moved on since then. There is a new game: my MP has me with balloons on the ends of sticks, and I hit Brussels with balloons on the ends of sticks. It may not be dignified, but as Politik goes, it is Real.

Semtex haul: Terrorists hit London warehouse

IRA gang raid arsenal of guns and explosives

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

An IRA gang raided a warehouse in London to recover a cache of guns and explosives left behind by another terrorist unit, according to anti-terrorism chiefs.

The three-man team used bolt cutters to force open 55 storage units before they found the arsenal of weapons, which are believed to have been left there by terrorists from a previous operation.

Enough explosives, probably Semtex and equipment to make a number of bombs are believed to have been removed in the raid. The seizure comes after security services and anti-terrorist chiefs warned that the IRA is preparing a pre-Christmas terror campaign.

A security guard was overpowered and a surveillance camera system deactivated during the break-in, which took place last Friday in Hammersmith, west London. Police last night appealed to the public for help and issued an impression of one of the raiders.

Commander John Grieve, head of the Anti-Terrorist Branch, said: "We have strong grounds to believe that something of considerable value to these men - possibly bomb-making equipment and firearms - may have been removed from at least one of the storage units."

"They were looking for something - they knew precisely what they were looking for."

Cmdr Grieve said that evidence left at the scene of the crime indicated that the IRA was responsible. Forensic experts are examining the unit for traces of explosives.

The break-in may be linked to previous anti-terrorist operations. An IRA member, Diarmuid O'Neill, 27, who was shot dead during a series of police dawn raids in west London and

bruised, but was not seriously hurt. They then disabled closed-circuit television and went through 55 of the 200 storage units before finding the suspected bomb-making equipment.

The police said the men left a huge amount of debris as they quickly tore through the units, which were individually hired out to store a variety of items, including furniture.

The men, who are believed to have put on fake accents and who wore rubber gloves, removed armloads of heavy objects before making their getaway. The security guard managed to free himself shortly after his attackers left and called the police.

A description of one of the men is of a white male aged 20-25 years, and 5ft 11in in height. He was wearing a black jacket and a dark woolly hat. The other two wore stocking masks. The police are particularly anxious to hear from anyone who may have seen the three men leave the premises and perhaps get into a car.

Cmdr Grieve asked specifically if people had sold a vehicle in suspicious circumstances or if they are renting residential or commercial property to "suspicious tenants". He also asked if people had recently let or re-let storage premises.

He added: "We are in for some dangerous months and it's on the back of that and this strong belief, that this was the work of Provisional IRA that we seek the public's help."

Wanted: One of the raiders

West Sussex in September, had worked and lived near to the self-storage units.

The risk and planning involved in Friday's operation suggests that the suspected stockpile must be important to the IRA.

The operation took place at 5.40pm at storage units in Shepherds Bush Place.

The men overpowered and handcuffed a security guard, who suffered from shock and

bruises. That doesn't go down well in the grey world of Mr Major.

It seems that having seen many less able colleagues attain ministerial office before him, Mr Davies decided to show his spurs by being troublesome. He did this after Labour colleagues suggested that he needed to raise his profile, since he was getting nowhere by toeing the line.

A friend of Mr Davies's added: "He is a very honourable man. He is not doing this out of bitterness, but because he believes that Parliament should publish the flag out for high standards. He feels that public perception of Parliament is at a low point and it is his duty to help ensure that this changes."

Quentin Davies: Inquisitor

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'Would you want this man as an enemy if your political career depended on his support?'

Christian Wolmar on the Tory MP who became the one-man scourge of David Willets

Quentin Davies is a member of the Tory awkward squad. David Willets, the Paymaster-General, was visibly shaken by his fierce grilling at the hands of Mr Davies in the hearings of the Committee of Standards and Privileges. He is also a member of the Treasury select committee and his questioning technique has certainly earned the admiration of fellow members there, one of whom, Labour MP Diane Abbott, described him as "like a ferret down a rat hole".

Mr Davies is not a man to have as your enemy when your political career depends on his vote. He has shown, in voting against the whip on the vote on the Scott inquiry last February which was only won because fellow rebel Rupert Allision voted at the last minute to go into the Tory lobby.

According to Ms Abbott: "He is not from the *salon des refusés* like the other Tory rebels. He is a raffish patrician, sir. As one Tory backbencher put it, 'He is doing it out of principle. He read

every word of the Scott report, unlike most of his colleagues, and that's why he felt he couldn't vote for the Government on it."

Several of Mr Davies's friends in the House are bemused that he has not achieved ministerial office since he was elected for Stamford and Spalding in 1987 given that his ability and intelligence easily outstrip those of his colleagues.

Ms Abbott said: "Once he is convinced of a case intellectually, nothing will sway him from it." This explains why Mr Davies was the only Tory rebel on the vote on the Scott inquiry last February which was only won because fellow rebel Rupert Allision voted at the last minute to go into the Tory lobby.

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Major Ian Hill, chairman of the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association, said 92 British Gulf veterans had died since the war. Major Hill, 50, who has himself become seriously ill, said: "My reactions are so impaired now that I would be lethal if I drove a car."

Hilary Meredith, a solicitor who also sits on the parliamentary group, said Dr Kang's findings were highly important. "Look at the ages of those who

have died," she said. "It cannot be right that these people who were physically fit when they went are dying at such a young age so soon after coming back."

Major Ian Hill, chairman of the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association, said 92 British Gulf veterans had died since the war. Major Hill, 50, who has himself become seriously ill, said: "My reactions are so impaired now that I would be lethal if I drove a car."

"But you have still got a lot of serving guys who have not come to terms with it yet. They are trying to work through their

symptoms because they do not want to lose their careers and their homes."

A total of 1,200 Gulf veterans are suing the MoD for compensation for their illnesses, which they believe were caused by chemicals that they were exposed to, either as incendiaries or nerve agents.

The Labour MP Alf Morris accused the Government of being far less concerned than the US about trying to find the causes of the illnesses. "There has been far more dash and a much greater sense of urgency across the Atlantic."

Growing death risk for Gulf War troops

IAN BURRELL

Troops who served in the Gulf War are 30 per cent more likely to die from accidents, suicide or homicide, than troops who did not go to the Gulf. The trend was even more pronounced among women.

The findings were obtained by Dr Norman Jones, a medical adviser to the Royal British Legion, which along with other servicemen's charities sponsored him on a tour of America to assess the latest medical research on Gulf illnesses.

Dr Jones' subsequent report, yesterday prompted a forthright attack on the Ministry of Defence by Edwina Currie, the former health minister, who sits on the all-party parlia-

mentary group. She said: "There is no doubt now that something adverse happened to a large number of our troops out there in the Gulf. The MoD should never discount reports of problems from veterans. They should at all times take seriously remarks made by those returning from fields of conflict." Although the MoD was finally admitting to a problem, "the tragedy is that it has taken so long".

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have died," she said. "It cannot be right that these people who were physically

13 Nov 1996

news

Smart set opt for the prawn cocktail

Clare Garner

It sounds like a recipe for dinner party disaster. Prawn cocktail, followed by chicken Kiev, rounded off with Black Forest Gateau – the culinary equivalent of dancing in flares to the Brotherhood of Man.

But such gastronomic clichés are making a comeback. Along with gammon and pineapple, duck à l'orange and sherry trifles, they are cropping up on some of London's swankiest menus.

Today's edition of *EatSmart*, the style magazine for foodies, claims that the capital's coolest chefs are rediscovering Seventies dinner party favourites. "Nico Ladenis does tournedos Rossini, Marco Pierre White has done chicken Kiev and yesterday I enjoyed prawn cocktail at the Halcyon," said Alan Crompton-Batt, a restaurant



A star is prawn again

guru who spotted the "Retro cuisine" trend.

Antony Worrall Thompson, the chef/proprietor who has opened several London restaurants serving modern Mediterranean food, says "gutsy" food has replaced "poncey" food. When he took over the Italian restaurant De Cecco earlier this year, regular customers were worried that his tastes would be too avant-garde. They signed a petition to keep avocado prawn on the menu.

They need not have worried. Mr Worrall Thompson said he has nothing against "Kitsch Kitchen" – provided the ingredients are good. "Melon boats with the orange sails – they sum up us struggling to find our way with cooking," he said. "But when you get a really good bit of melon in season, there's nothing to beat Parma ham and melon."

But these 1970s staples still go down badly in some restaurants. Rose Gray, of the River Café, in west London, said: "My God! There's nothing much that we do in that line. I would never, ever do prawn cocktail in a million years. If I was going to do prawns, I'd grill them and put fresh chilli and fennel seed and olive oil on them. That would be my prawn cocktail."

But for some, Retro food has never gone away. King Prawn Sunday – or prawn cocktail – has had an uninterrupted career at the Beefeater chain since it opened 22 years ago. "It represents the Beefeater heartland," a spokeswoman said. "People want what they had before."

The drink rules that would empty Britain's boardrooms

James Cusick

The criteria used by a company doctor to brand a television executive a heavy drinker, killing a highly paid job offer, would deplete the boardrooms of British and US companies, a professor told the High Court yesterday.

Professor Neil McIntyre, of London's Royal Free hospital, was giving evidence on the second day of a civil action brought by executive Peter Baker against Dr Georges Kaye.

In 1991 Mr Baker, who now runs his own television distribution company, was on the verge of taking up the £45,000 post of sales director for the American network NBC in Europe when he was examined by Dr Kaye. Dr Kaye's report described Mr Baker, now 53, as "clinically corpulent" and a "reg-

ular heavy drinker". The job offer was withdrawn. Dr Kaye is being sued by Mr Baker for compensation.

During Dr Kaye's assessment, Mr Baker revealed he drank about 35 units of alcohol a week – equal to 17.5 pints of beer and seven units above the Government's recommended limit.

In court on Monday Mr Baker said that during a "bit of a spree" in Monte Carlo, the week before his medical examination he had been celebrating his new job and drinking around a bottle of wine each day.

In court yesterday Dr Brian Gazzard, a consultant physician at the Chelsea and Westminster hospital in London, described asking people for their own alcohol intake as "a guessing game".

Dr Kaye told the judge, Robert Owen, QC, that he had not solely re-



Peter Baker: Suing over lost job

He believed Mr Baker was underestimating his alcohol intake.

In 1991, expecting to move to the post at GE Technical Services (part of NBC), Mr Baker quit a £40,000 job at Guild TV.

Dr Michael Rehmar, the former medical director of GE, told the court that in recent years "alcohol at lunch began to be frowned upon". People who could not make the change left the company, he said. He added that alcohol "interfered" with decisions and could have cost the company "hundreds of millions of dollars".

Dr Kaye's examination had involved blood and liver tests, the court was told. But Dr Anne Cockroft, a consultant and senior lecturer in occupational medicine at the Royal Free, said it was "not good medicine" to rely on

blood tests of liver function as an indication of alcohol abuse. She said Mr Baker's sickness and absence records should have been examined.

Professor McIntyre was also questioned on Dr Kaye's methodology. He described the descriptions of Mr Baker as "looking edgy" and being "clinically corpulent" as "rather pointless".

On Mr Baker's admission of consuming 35 units of alcohol a week Professor McIntyre said: "I would have thought that wouldn't alarm anyone."

Answering questions from Mr Baker's counsel, John Bowers, the professor said: "The boardrooms of British and American companies would be depleted" if similar judgements on the same level of alcohol intake were applied.

The hearing continues.



Lunchtime drinkers 1990s style: A bar in London's Canary Wharf frequented by journalists and bankers

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

US health police export new attitudes

Liz Hunt

Health Editor

Sympathy was running high yesterday for "clinically corpulent" Peter Baker.

The British pro- and anti-alcohol lobbies were united in their condemnation of the US broadcasting company NBC, which allegedly discriminated against Mr Baker, 54, on the grounds that his drinking habits – more than moderate but far from heavy – would interfere with his crispness of thought.

From the British standpoint, it is clear that Mr Baker is not some sozzled left-over from the heady years of the 1980s, when the four-hour liquid lunch

was the norm. Instead, it seems that Mr Baker's drinking is, well, about average for a man of his age in that profession.

Eric Appleby, director of Alcohol Concern, said: "If British companies took that [American] attitude then there would be a very thin workforce. The crucial question is when did he do his drinking?"

At the Portman Group, which represents the drink industry, Andrew Chevill said that a large number of people drank more than Mr Baker each day without any detrimental effect on their work.

Certainly there has been a sea-change in attitudes to drink and the workplace since the

1980s but this has less to do with the advance of the "health police" and the arrival of puritanical American companies, than with down-sizing and increasing workload. People are not drinking very much less in total – alcohol consumption has fallen just 2 to 3 per cent in the past 10 years – however, they are drinking differently. There is less alcohol during the day and less in the pub, but more at the weekend and at home.

The biggest change has occurred in those professions which were predominantly male, cushioned by expense accounts, and reliant on a certain amount of "entertaining". For example, journalists and

printers appear to have been fuelled by alcohol for much of Fleet Street's history. There were many candidates claiming to have inspired Peter Fallon, the drink-sodden British hack immortalised in Tom Wolfe's chronicle of 1980s excess, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*.

Alan Watkins, political commentator of the *Independent on Sunday* has fond memories of the 1960s, when the clock struck 12pm and journalists would head for an aperitif and not return from lunch until 4.30pm.

The view that alcohol and work don't mix has led to "a decline in journalism and more boring politicians", he opines. He maintains that it had no effect on him other than weight gain.

That Mr Baker's consumption of 35 units of alcohol a week – just one more a day than the recommended limit for men – should alarm a US company should not really come as a sur-

prise. Attitudes to alcohol between the two countries are dramatically different: a third of the population in the US is teetotal compared with just 5 per cent or less here. A survey in 1994 found that while 19 per cent of American office workers liked to unwind with a drink, in the UK the figure was 55 per cent.

In his book, *Drink: An Informal Social History*, Andrew Barr wrote that "authoritative governments have more reason to be afraid of people when they think than when they drink". While American companies prefer the thinkers here the UK there is still some sympathy for the drinkers too.

Research: Susan Emmett.

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news

Unions get ready for cut in working hours

Barrie Clement,
Michael Harrison and
Chris Godsmark

Britain's largest union yesterday began drawing up a target list of workers who should benefit most from the working time directive while business leaders urged the Government to take full advantage of the exemptions.

The public service union Unison yesterday declared that senior local government officials, residential social workers, ambulance and police support staff would be among the workers who should soon see a reduction in their working hours below 48 hours week.

The thousands of part-time workers who work in the public sector should benefit from an entitlement to three weeks' paid holiday, rising to four weeks in 1999. Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of Unison, said that cleaners, dinner ladies and

Leading article, page 13

people who work during term times at schools would be among those targeted. He added: "We will be vigilant in making sure that the directive is implemented properly and on time. And we will take legal action against employers and the Government if they fail."

John Edmonds, leader of the GMB general union, said his organisation had set aside £250,000 for litigation against employers if necessary. "We want to make sure the Government doesn't try any third-form public schoolboy tricks to avoid implementing the law. We will also pursue with vigour any employer who jeopardises their workers by forcing them to work long hours."

In what might be regarded as a piece of mischief, the MSF technical and white-collar union announced that it would set up

a telephone "hot line" to help businesses understand the directive. It has also prepared special information packs for companies to explain how they can implement the measures.

The Confederation of British Industry said it was disappointed at the ruling but urged the Government to take full advantage of the exemptions and begin consultation with business on implementation of the directive.

Speaking at its conference in Harrogate, Adair Turner, the CBI's director-general, described the directive as "legislation at its worst - detailed and prescriptive regulations followed by extensive caveats and exemptions". The CBI said it was vital that the Government implemented options that would allow individual employees to work 48 hours if they wished and permit employers to average the 48-hour week over 12 months.

The British Chambers of Commerce said that two-thirds of small businesses opposed a 48-hour week. According to a BCC survey, eight in ten firms felt it would impinge on their flexibility, while 43 per cent said it would increase administration costs. But the survey also showed that 91 per cent of those working more than 48 hours were doing so voluntarily. Such arrangements can stay in place.

Ian Peters, deputy director-general, said small firms would find it hardest to cope: "They haven't got the resources to defend themselves if they are taken to court."

Chris Haskins, chairman of Northern Foods, one of the biggest food groups and a well-known Labour supporter, was less concerned. "It's much ado about nothing. We already have health and safety legislation over pilots and lorry drivers to prevent people working excessive hours," he argued.

During the two years since it launched its legal challenge to the working hours directive, Britain has built its entire case around the claim that workers' health and safety is unconnected to the hours they work. British lawyers told the court that the chance to take regular breaks, and enjoy paid annual leave does not affect workers' well-being, health and safety at work was purely about ensuring they were not exposed to obvious risks such as dangerous equipment.

Using this argument Britain went on to claim, therefore, that other member states had no right to pass the working week directive under article 118a of the Treaty of Rome, which governs the European Union.

Throughout the legal wrangle, senior government officials have scarcely been able to hide their uneasiness about the weakness of this legal case, and

THE 48-HOUR WEEK DEBATE



A portion of time off: Dinner ladies could be among the first public service staff to benefit from the Working Time Directive's provisions on holidays, which stipulate that employees must be given a minimum of three weeks' paid holiday a year. For others, the hours limit will bring the greatest benefits

Photograph: Brian Hains

Battle that Britain was expecting to lose

Sarah Helm
Brussels

The number of hours worked each week can rightly be thought to affect the health and safety of workers.

It was this short, and, some would say, self-evident, assertion from the European Court of Justice, which yesterday spelt defeat for Britain in the European Court, propelling the Government into another full-scale conflict with Europe.

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Throughout the legal wrangle, senior government officials have scarcely been able to hide their uneasiness about the weakness of this legal case, and

the Government clearly anticipated yesterday's defeat.

However, the court challenge was deemed necessary if the Government was to pursue its political imperative of blocking further legislation under article 118a. Article 118a is highly contentious for Britain because it is governed by qualified majority voting, and therefore gives Britain no power of veto.

In its case before the court, therefore, Britain argued that the working hours directive

should have been brought in under different treaty articles, where the veto could have been used. Latterly, the Government has even tried to argue that the directive should have been brought in under the social chapter - from which Britain has an "opt-out" - even though the "opt out" was not thought of at the time the directive was proposed.

The judges said: "There is nothing in the wording of Article 118a to indicate that the concepts of 'working environment', 'safety' and 'health' ... should be interpreted restrictively." The interpretation could rightly embrace "all factors, physical or otherwise, capable of affecting the health and safety of the working in his work-

ing environment, including, in particular, certain aspects of organisation of working time".

Although the court accepted that the directive could cost money and have an effect on employment, the protection of health and safety was a valid community objective. And, giving member states and the EC a tacit green-light to consider new social legislation, the court said that hours worked should not be decided "by purely economic considerations".

As the politicians wrangle, companies get on with it

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

Despite the Government's campaign against the working time directive, private sector companies have already started talks with unions on how the law will apply.

The first to reach an agreement on behalf of 1,100 firms employing 20,000 people was the Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association, which has secured a deal allowing them maximum flexibility over the 48-hour week.

The MSF white collar and technical union has agreed that companies can take advantage of "derogations" from the strict letter of the directive so that working time is averaged out over 12 months rather than the stipulated four months.

Peter Rimmer, head of employment affairs at the association, said his organisation had carried out a detailed review of the law some months ago and had prepared the way for yesterday's judgment by the European Court. The deal would give the sector considerable freedom and was a "pragmatic" approach to the directive.

"We had to recognise that when the Advocate General ruled against the Government's appeal earlier this year, there was a degree of inevitability about the whole issue."

Unions at a Japanese-owned motor components company, Denso Marston, are expecting to sign an accord incorporating the directive into their collective agreement. The company employs 2,000 workers at plants at Leeds, Shipley and Telford.

Elsewhere the printing industry has already begun discussions with the GPMU union on how companies will be able to cope with the massive fluctuations in demand experienced by the sector while still adhering to the directive. The pre-Christmas period, for instance, means that many employees are working overtime in greetings card companies with some exceeding the 48-hour limit.

The British Printing Industries Federation opposes the directive in principle, but has arranged a joint seminar with the union in order to come to terms with it.

Andrew Brown, employment affairs director at the federation, said: "We don't like the directive, it is badly worded and will impede our ability to give customer service, but the ruling is

the ruling." He pointed out that any manufacturing industry which was subject to fluctuations in demand would need to examine how the law would affect them and he urged the Government to produce a consultative document as soon as possible.

Preliminary talks have also been held at British Steel, which employs 43,000 workers in the United Kingdom. More will follow, a spokesman said. The privatised company is concerned in particular on how the rules on night working and shifts would affect production.

Keith Brookman, general secretary of the ISTC steel union, said his organisation was keen to offer the company flexibility but was also concerned to introduce changes which would benefit members.

Long days can damage your health, say scientists

Jojo Moyes

As the Government yesterday claimed that the European Union had enforced the 48-hour week through the "back door" of health and safety regulations, two scientists who had submitted evidence to the European Court said that the recommendation was justified.

Professor Simon Folkard of Swansea University, who was asked to present a medical case to the court, compared it to the effect of alcohol on driving. "We can't put our hands on our hearts and say that's the perfect limit but we can say there's a need for limits," he said yesterday.

"One of the things my group is trying to do is establish a link between disturbed sleep at one end and increased cardiovascular risk at the other. There is some evidence that disturbed

sleep results in chronic fatigue, which results in psychological problems, which results in gastro-intestinal problems, which may result in cardiovascular problems."

He added that a finer examination of the effects of long working hours showed an "exponential function", in that working one hour over 40 may have very little impact on a worker, whereas one hour added onto a 60-hour week could have a "massive effect".

"The evidence suggests that if people work excessive hours they have health and safety problems. Forty-eight hours seems a very reasonable limit to me," Prof Folkard said.

Professor Malcolm Harrington of Birmingham University was asked by the then Department of Employment to review the existing evidence on whether the Working Time Di-

rective could be based on health and safety issues.

Although he concluded that it was "difficult" to fix an exact number of hours, as there was no specific scientific evidence to back it, he said that a 48-hour limit was not unreasonable - and that the figure should be "certainly not much higher".

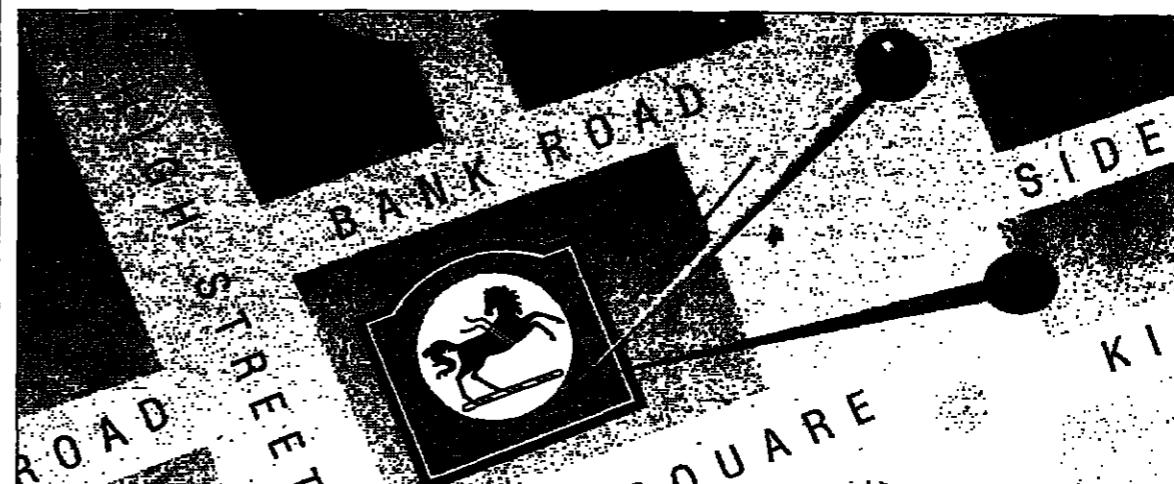
"If you look at more than 56 hours, there is a lot of evidence that [that] would be detrimental. If policy makers then say 48 hours it doesn't bother me."

He is currently researching the effects of long working hours on white collar workers and their companies.

Meanwhile, Chris Cardell, a business stress management consultant, believes that despite being widely criticised by business leaders, the implementation of a 48-hour week, would be a "blessing in disguise" for British firms.

He said absences from work through stress and stress-related illnesses cost UK businesses £7 billion a year, and the new law could save money.

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news

Bah, humbug! Newley plans a Dickens of a musical



What the Dickens: Anthony Newley in his dressing-room at the Dominion Theatre, London, preparing for yesterday's opening of the musical Scrooge. Photograph: Laurie Lewis

Deadly dog worm spreads across Britain

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

A lethal worm disease appears to be spreading among foxes and dogs in Britain. The parasite has been found in foxes for the first time, indicating that they are a reservoir of infection.

Both the young forms of the nematode worm, *Angiostrongylus vasorum*, and the adult damage the heart, blood vessels and lungs and cause internal bleeding. The disease can be successfully treated if diagnosed early.

"It seems that it is well and

truly established among dogs and foxes, and there are indications that it is spreading," said Vic Simpson, the Cornwall-based Ministry of Agriculture vet who discovered the parasite in foxes.

He and colleagues have observed cases spreading across a

larger and larger area of the county. A few years ago, dogs were becoming infected in an area near Redruth only one mile across. Now it is about 25 miles across, with around a dozen cases a year. There is a similar focus of infection in south Wales, near Swansea, and cases have

been reported among dogs in the South-east.

"As part of its complex and unpleasant life cycle, the nematode also parasitises frogs and two species of slugs which thrive in the warm, damp climate of Cornwall."

These slugs have been observed to feed on dog faeces – and dogs occasionally eat slugs, which is how the disease spreads among pets. Foxes, too, are avid eaters of slugs, especially when young, and they also hunt frogs.

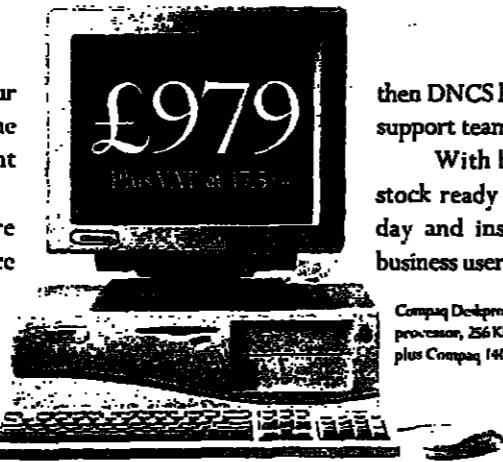
Last year a young male fox was found wandering aimlessly in the Cornish village of Mousehole. It failed to recover and was put down, and when Mr Simpson examined it he found large numbers of the parasite in its lungs, heart and blood vessels. Mousehole is

some 20 miles from the area where dogs are infected.

Until recently the disease has never been observed among British foxes, although it has been found in several other European countries.

Mr Simpson has subsequently found the parasite in four out of a further eleven dead foxes he examined at the ministry's Veterinary Investigation Unit in Truro. Three of these animals also had severe mange, which has become much more common in foxes lately. His findings are reported in a recent edition of the *Veterinary Record*.

Mr Simpson says the mange and worm infections could indicate that foxes' defence systems against disease have been lowered by stress caused by their high population density.



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Strikes that could be end of the world

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

What we should do is plot the orbits of those which could threaten us and predict when they would strike. Then you have enough warning to do something about it."

A spokeswoman for the Department of Trade and Industry said that a nuclear strike against an asteroid "would need international co-operation before such action could be considered. It's being treated as a hypothetical."

The Earth is certainly at risk from a future asteroid impact. The planet has been hit repeatedly by celestial bodies of various sizes, sometimes with drastic results. About 65 million years ago, an 160-kilometre-wide asteroid travelling at 20,000 mph struck near Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula – causing the death of the dinosaurs.

In June 1908, an asteroid less than 100 metres wide crashed into the atmosphere above Tunguska, Siberia, with the force of a 1.5-megaton bomb and flattened trees across hundreds of square kilometres.

And sometime in the next million years, scientists have calculated, the 22-kilometre asteroid Eros, presently in the vicinity of Mars, will fall towards the Earth.

In June, an internal civil service report advised the Ministry of Defence to employ three people to sift through the current data on the threat of a cosmic impact.

But Mr Hughes thought the risks of a devastating collision were low.

"Life has survived. We are here. These asteroids have been hitting the Earth continually since its origin, the rate of asteroidal impact has been going down since its origin, and life has survived," he said.



The scene after an asteroid crashed into the atmosphere above Siberia in 1908. Photograph: Science Photo Library

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Bishop urges tax boost for family values

Andrew Brown
Religious Affairs Correspondent

An evangelical bishop has called for tax allowances for families which would encourage parents to stay at home.

Speaking at the Evangelical Alliance in Bournemouth yesterday, the Bishop of Hull, the Rt Rev James Jones, told the 3000 delegates that the present tax regime penalised parents.

"Politicians must match their rhetoric about the family with policies that actually strengthen the family. It is clear that the taxation system has been one of the major factors to drive both parents from home to the detriment of their children," he said.

The bishop also suggested that child benefit be doubled for couples who were prepared to go to parenting courses. "To plough millions of pounds, as we do, into consequences of bad parenting, instead of investing in good parents is like deliberately overlooking a vaccine in favour of treating an epidemic," he said.

However, he warned his audience against denouncing unchristian sexual morality, rather than trying to change it by persuasion and example. He compared British evangelicals today to the missionaries to Africa in the last century who were confronted with the problem of polygamy.

"The least effective missionaries were those who insisted that potential converts first turn from their many marriages. We witness many relationships that are less than the ideal, yet



Good News: Evangelical delegates pray for fair media coverage of their annual conference in Bournemouth yesterday

Photograph: Tom Pilston

"Victorian evangelicals remember that paradoxically there are virtues of security and friendship within them."

His speech marks a considerable growth in self-confidence among evangelicals, who hope that they are poised to begin a transformation of society similar to that achieved by their Victorian forebears.

The 3,000 leaders meeting in Bournemouth this week believe they represent nearly half of Britain's Protestants, and will soon represent the majority. A poll of their churches has just showed that support for social action and poverty relief is as strong as that for upholding traditional sexual morality and protesting against abortion.

Rev Clive Calver, director general of the Evangelical Alliance yesterday.

The evangelical agenda of conservatism around the family but radicalism towards the

problems of the poor is emerging clearly both from this conference and from the recent speeches of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey.

Yesterday Dr Carey told an

audience of local authority chief executives: "Parenting should surely be seen as a fundamentally important calling and duty requiring the most careful preparation, not least at school,

and the strong support of the wider society."

But he also warned against excluding children from society and from schools: "I hold to firm discipline allied to caring teaching

ing. Nevertheless, children who are excluded from school for whatever reason are a problem for us all because we know how strong is the correlation between school exclusion and a subsequent career of delinquency and crime."

"Excluded and marginalised people, especially frustrated young males, have a way of biting back in spectacular fashion. Exclusion as a tactic, without a strongly resourced strategy for helping those youngsters back along the road of self-respect and reintegration in society, would surely prove disastrous."

He praised the recent Roman Catholic bishop's document *The Common Good*, which has been widely seen as an exhortation to vote against the Conservative Government. "The gap between the poorest and richer parts of our society has increased, even if there is a great deal of mobility between the two. Only those determined to ignore the evidence will deny that there are significant sections of our society living in circumstances which should not be tolerated," Dr Carey said.

DAILY POEM

If it was a train only, it wasn't
at this small station

By Thomas McCarthy

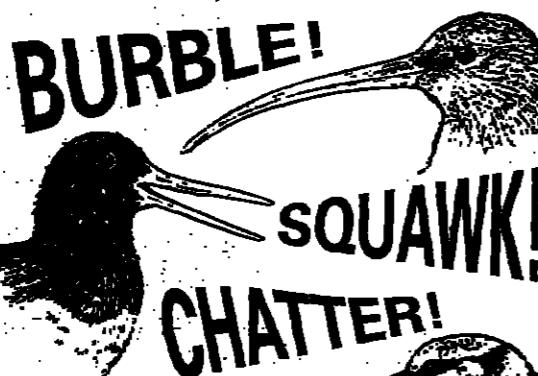
*It was one of those five afternoons
in Paradise. A bone-dry day,
nestles and parsley on the embankment.
A train pulled out of Cappoquin station.*

*The earth moved, and the train
like an elephant splitting through the trees
beat me from the ticket office. Was it
Jackie Greene, the phlegmatic clerk.*

*who flagged it back again?
I can't remember. But I recall my foot
on the grey, moulded pedal-step
and the feel of a master's hand at my back*

*pushing me on. The August afternoon
carried me drunk to Dungarvan.
Even then I knew I'd used one day
out of the four or five in childhood.*

Peter Jay's Arvil Press has been publishing poetry in and around Greenwich for 28 years. Its homegrown talent includes Carol Ann Duffy, Heather Buck, Alice Oswald, Peter Levi and James Harpur and, in translation, Paul Celan, Vasko Popa and the Nobel Prize winner, Seamus Heaney. This autumn a new and ambitious list is launched. There are new collections by Thomas McCarthy, James Harpur and Ruth Silcock, and the publication of Peter Dale's one-volume modern English *terza rima* version of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* – more than 10 years in the making.



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news

Put away the whist and rummy: casinos are coming to Eastbourne, Bath and Harrogate

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

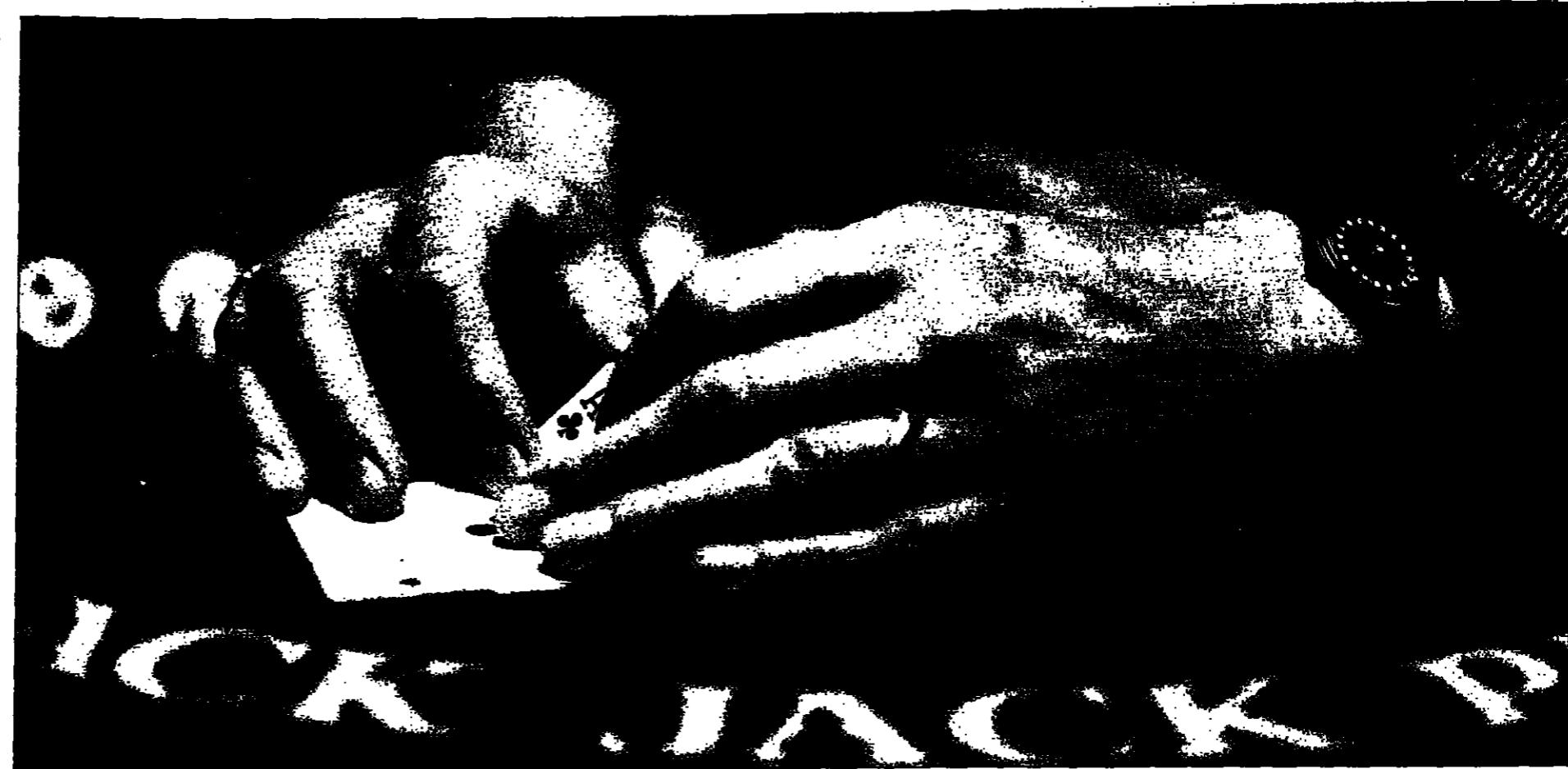
The establishment of two new "Las Vegas" style gambling centres – in the north of England and in London – came a step closer yesterday as the Home Office proposed allowing at least 21 new casinos.

Among the potential gambling zones are the spa town of Bath, the retirement mecca of Eastbourne and the cathedral cities of Exeter and York. The Home Office also plans to allow

slot machines with unlimited stakes and pay-outs, similar to the ones in the United States that spent out buckets of dollars. At present the jackpot limit is £250.

But despite admitting that the new casinos could lead to more gambling addicts, the Government is refusing to fund a new national group to help those affected.

The new measures are part of the Home Office's gambling deregulation proposals, which include the promotion



High stakes: A big expansion in gambling is planned by the Home Office, with two 'Las Vegas' style gaming centres likely to develop in England

Photograph: John Voss

and expansion of casinos. The Home Office published a consultation paper on the issue in February, but since then a number of local authorities have expressed a desire to add casinos to their list of tourist attractions.

Several councils in the Docklands area of east London, which includes the Canary Wharf development, have asked to be included. If they obtained permission many gambling houses could be built by the Thames. Similarly,

Harrogate and York, which have been added to the proposed "permitted area" list for casinos, could link up with Leeds to form a northern gambling triangle.

Seven towns which cater for more than 5,000 conference delegates have been added to the Home Office's original list of potential sites.

The additional conference town locations are Bath, Eastbourne, Exeter, Harrogate, Norwich, Telford, and York.

There are already proposals

for Gloucester, Oxford, Hastings, Ipswich, Swindon, Dartford, Redbridge, Slough, Folkestone, Morecambe and Weymouth. The local authorities in Croydon and Peterborough, which were also on the original list, have lodged objections with the Home Office, which is now re-considering those sites.

Announcing the proposals yesterday, Timothy Kirkhope, the Home Office minister, insisted that the Government did not want to emulate Las Vegas

or Atlantic City, where dozens of casinos are crammed together to form long gambling strips. "We don't think that approach would work and we are not going to encourage it," he said.

Proposals for the existing 119 casinos in England and Wales made by the Home Office include allowing the owners to advertise their facilities in regional newspapers and magazines and allowing casinos to have up to three slot machines per gaming table. That

would let the largest casino in London have 100. It is also proposed that members of a casino could have access to other clubs in the same group and that membership could be arranged by post.

The Home Office will carry out further consultation up to the end of January. Mr Kirkhope said it was "conceivable" that the measures could be in place before a May general election, but that seems unlikely.

Mr Kirkhope confirmed that the Government will not provide

any new money to fund groups that help gambling addicts. A charity called the National Association for Gambling Care, Educational Resources and Training hopes to open in a few months in response to the rising number of gambling-related problems. Paul Bellinger, a founder of the organisation, said: "With the opening up of gambling in this country there are more people who have got into problems and the need for treatment and training is greater than ever before."

Russia's lawless caviar merchants dish the sturgeon

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

The days of caviar and the sturgeon fish which produces it could be numbered because of greed and the collapse of authority in Russia and other former Soviet nations, according to investigators into illegal wildlife trading.

A report for Traffic, which monitors and seeks to uncover traders in endangered species, says lawlessness prevails along much of the shores of the Caspian Sea, stronghold of the stur-

geon whose unfertilised eggs make caviar.

Quotas and fishing techniques used to conserve the fish, which can take up 25 years to mature, have largely disappeared.

According to official figures, the legitimate catch in the Caspian fell by three-quarters between 1984 and 1994. Yet, says the report published today, exports appeared to be unaffected while the amount of effort put into fishing increased. It concludes that at least 50 per cent of the catch is illegal.

Tom De Meulenaer, director of Traffic in Europe, said: "Immediate measures to seriously control the whole industry, from fisheries to the consumer, are required if the industry and sturgeon are to survive."

There are 25 species of sturgeon, two of which are believed to be particularly endangered. But 90 per cent of the world's catch and caviar comes from three species found in the Caspian Sea – the beluga, the Russian and the stellate. The Beluga can grow up to 20ft long. The main exporters are

Russia and Iran and the biggest single importing bloc is the European Union. Britain takes about 30 tons of caviar a year, making it the continent's third biggest consumer after Germany and France. In Britain caviar can be bought only from up-market department stores and specialist outlets. A 30g jar costs about £30.

The report puts the blame for poor fisheries control and smuggling on Russia and two of its neighbouring republics, Astrakhan and Azerbaijan. It says that some caviar coming into

Europe has been suspiciously cheap, indicating that it has been smuggled or that its origins are illicit. But fishing is not alone in creating the plight of the sturgeon, which evolved 250 million years ago – before the dinosaurs. Damming of its spawning grounds, damage and diversion of waterways and pollution have added to the threats.

Timour and other disorders have been found in adult fish, while analysis of caviar samples on sale in Britain revealed very low traces of toxic organochlorine compounds such as DDT and PCBs.

But fishing is by far the main culprit and the report, endorsed by the World Wide Fund for Nature, calls for the rapid restoration of proper controls on the fishery.

The report says trawling for sturgeon, once outlawed as a conservation measure, has resumed. The illegal fishing is no secret – in 1994 Russian authorities said they had detained more than 1,000 poachers, confiscated more than 100 tons of sturgeon and five tons of caviar,

and shut seven illegal caviar processing plants. Only one species of sturgeon, the common, occasionally visits the seas around Britain. A few are caught off our coast each year.

John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, flew to Argentina last night for international treaty negotiations on conserving wildlife. However, the Government was under fire for neglecting endangered sea birds on the mid-Atlantic island of Ascension. A plague of feral rats and cats, introduced by man, has severely depleted their numbers.

Experts have devised a £1.5m plan for eradicating the pests, which eat eggs and nestlings on the UK dependent territory. But the Government has only offered to cover 2 per cent of the cost.

A spokesman for UK conservation charities, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, said they were happy to pay a large share but "the bottom line is that we expect a serious contribution from the Government".



The big haul: The sturgeon has brought rich rewards for fishermen round the Caspian Sea. That could soon change

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Pupils take to 'work' courses

Judith Judd
Education Editor

All 14-year-olds should be able to study new work-related qualifications in school within two years, Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, announced yesterday.

She spoke as an inspectors' report showed that new qualifications in health and social care, business and manufacturing are motivating students.

Ministers hope the courses, which are being offered as an alternative to GCSEs, will attract pupils bored by academic study. This year information technology, leisure and tourism and art and design have been added. Next year, engineering will come on stream.

The inspectors investigated 115 schools piloting the courses (part 1 GNVQs) for 5,500 14- and 15-year-olds and found that standards were highest in business and lowest in manufacturing. They said teachers needed to be brought up to date in manufacturing.

Ministers have begun to address the report's criticisms that the assessment is too cumbersome and complicated and that teachers do not understand how to mark the work. Students of all abilities were attracted to the courses, though there were proportionately fewer of the most and least able.

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said his survey showed teachers had a positive attitude to the qualification but a quarter of schools felt that it was under-funded.

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international

Human error blamed for air crash

Confusion over instructions

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

The two aircraft which crashed west of Delhi last night, one landing and one taking off, were close to the airport, and under right air traffic control from the ground and visible on radar.

It looks as if either the controllers made a catastrophic mistake, or one of the aircraft - which were in the most vulnerable phases of their flight, taking off or landing - did not do as it was told or misunderstood instructions.

Two years ago, an Uzbek aircraft crashed at Delhi after confusion caused by language difficulties, and it may be that communication difficulties may again have been the problem.

Whatever the cause, the crash will renew concern about the risk of mid-air collisions close to airports in Britain, where there have been a number of "near misses" which could have killed hundreds of people. The Indian crash will be the subject of minute investigation, but a technical cause looks unlikely. Precise details, like the height at which the aircraft were flying when they collided, were not initially available.

"Under air traffic control they are told what to do. Provided they did what they are told to do, it was an air traffic control error," said David Rider, editor of *Jane's Air Traffic Control*. "Otherwise, it was pilot error - if an aircraft was told to turn right and turned left, for example."

The Saudi Boeing 747 airliner taking off from New Delhi's Indira Gandhi airport collided with a Ilyushin-154 of Kazakhstan airlines close to the ground, according to initial eyewitness reports which spoke of "fireballs".

A report by the Press Trust of India (PTI) cited officials of the Civil Aviation Directorate as saying the Saudi plane, SV 763, had been cleared to climb to 14,000 feet and the Kazakh airliner, KZ-A 1907, had been cleared to descend to 15,000 feet on the same route. Such a separation of 1000 feet is perfectly normal, PTI said. The radar blips of both aircraft disappeared seven minutes after the Saudi airliner took off. The aircraft crashed about 60 miles west of Delhi.

Flights over most of India are not radar-controlled from the ground, and they use "procedural control" - strict separation by time, distance and altitude. Delta airport is one of a number currently undergoing a massive modernisation programme. It now has radar which reaches out to about 50 miles, and which is normally used only to monitor aircraft approaching Delhi, according to Peter Quaintance, the technical director of the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations. Departing aircraft follow a standard path to link up with known airways.

The crash therefore probably occurred outside ground radar control, but why the two aircraft, which should have been widely separated in time, space and distance flew into each other remains a mystery.

In Britain, by contrast, the air traffic control tower normally hands over a departing aircraft to the regional air traffic control centre at about ten to twelve miles out. As in India, the airport spends more time monitoring inbound aircraft than outbound.

Indian airspace is extremely crowded because aircraft flying from the far east to Europe are funnelled through a corridor over the country. European airports are not open at night and therefore aircraft tend to congregate over Asia, where air traffic control, in one expert's words last night "Leaves something to be desired".

The Pan-Am 747 crash over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people was the result of a terrorist bomb. The horror of that crash was revisited this summer with the explosion of TWA Flight 800 over Long Island, New York, killing 230 people.

Disaster is third worst in history

Elizabeth Wine

Yesterday's mid-air plane crash in India ranks third on the list of the world's worst air crashes. The causes of the top ten disasters are a mixed bag, falling into two main categories: terrorism or deliberate fire by the military; and mechanical or pilot failure.

The worst crash ever resulted from the collision of two planes and killed 528 people. In March 1977, two Boeing 747s crashed on the ground at the airport on Tenerife.

Four of the ten most lethal air crashes involved a single plane crashing either through pilot error, mechanical failure or bad weather. The remaining four downed planes had been targeted by terrorists or shot down by military aircraft of another country.

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The plane fell into the Atlantic after exploding in a fireball minutes after what seemed to be a routine takeoff. The cause of the crash, in which everyone on board was killed, remained a mystery.

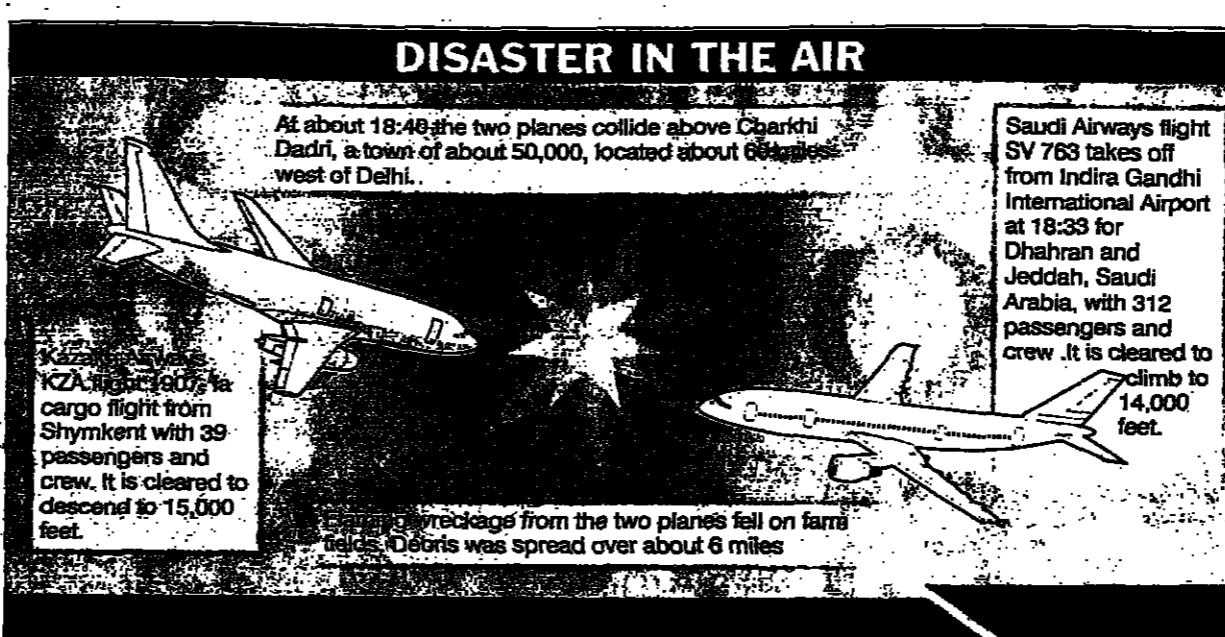
is still a mystery. Another crash attributed to terrorism killed 329 in June 1985 when an Air India Boeing 747 crashed off the coast of Ireland.

One of two crashes in the top ten involving the military came in July 1988 when the USS Vincennes shot down an Iran Air A300 Airbus over the Gulf killing 290. The other commercial craft, a Korean Air Lines 747, was shot down by a Soviet fighter after it flew near Sakhalin, killing 26 people.

The second-worst crash killed 520 people when a Japan Air Lines Boeing 747 crashed into a mountain on a domestic flight in August 1985. A Turkish DC-10 crashed northeast of Paris in March 1974, killing 346.

In August 1980, a Saudi Arabian L-1011 jet crashed, killing 301, while attempting an emergency landing at Riyadh airport. An American Airlines DC-10 crashed upon takeoff in Chicago, killing 273 in May 1979.

Other deadly mid-air collisions include the crash of a Libyan airliner and an air force MiG-23 fighter that killed 155 people in December 1992. The plane fell into the Atlantic after exploding in a fireball minutes after what seemed to be a routine takeoff. The cause of the crash, in which everyone on board was killed, remained a mystery.



Worst ever: The scene after the 1977 Tenerife crash

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First novel is shock winner of France's top literary prize

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

British Airways yesterday lost its appeal against having to pay compensation to French passengers who were held as "human shields" in Kuwait in the opening weeks of the Gulf War. Upholding the year-old judgment of a lower court, a Paris judge ruled that half the compensation should be paid at once, and stipulated that BA could not launch a further appeal until that payment had been made.

The 61 passengers have been awarded between 400,000 and 600,000 francs (£80,000-\$120,000) each, according to the time they spent in captivity, a total bill for BA of more than £3m. The Paris appeals court confirmed the compensation for all but five of the 61



Title winner: Pascale Rose, whose novel Zero Hunter took this year's Prix Goncourt

Her winning novel relates the long search of a daughter to find out about the death of her father, killed by a Japanese kamikaze pilot during the Second World War.

The award of the prize for a first novel raised eyebrows when it was announced on yesterday's lunchtime television news. Aficionados of the Goncourt also expressed astonishment that the award had gone for the second time in three years to the publishing house Albin Michel.

Three of France's biggest publishers - Gallimard, Le Seuil and Grasset - act as trustees for all five of France's top literary awards, and the back-stabbing politics of French publishing are traditionally regarded as no less important in deciding the awards than literary merit.

The tally of Goncourts since the beginning stands at 82 for Gallimard, 59 for Grasset and 29 for Le Seuil, with Albin the next best placed with 14 awards.

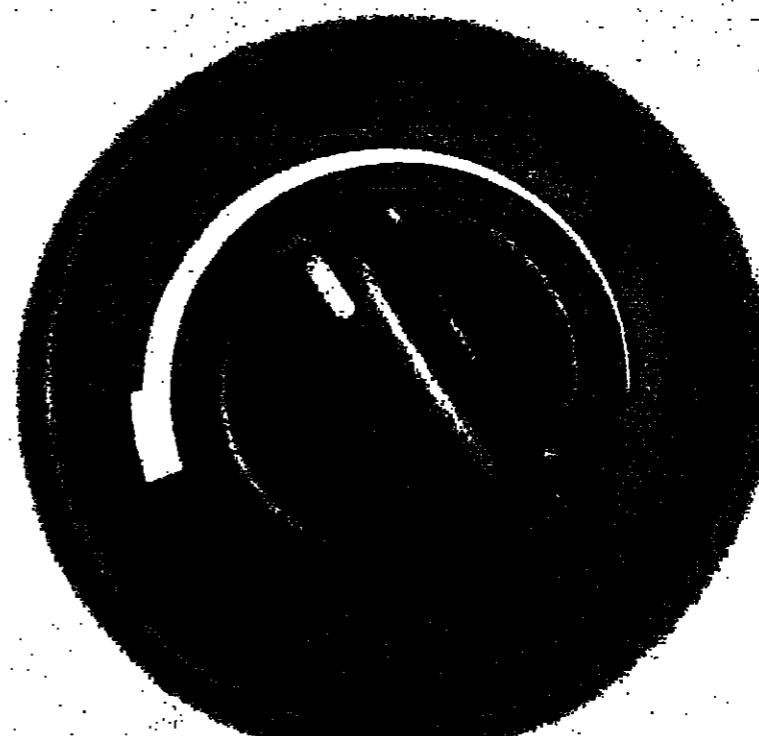
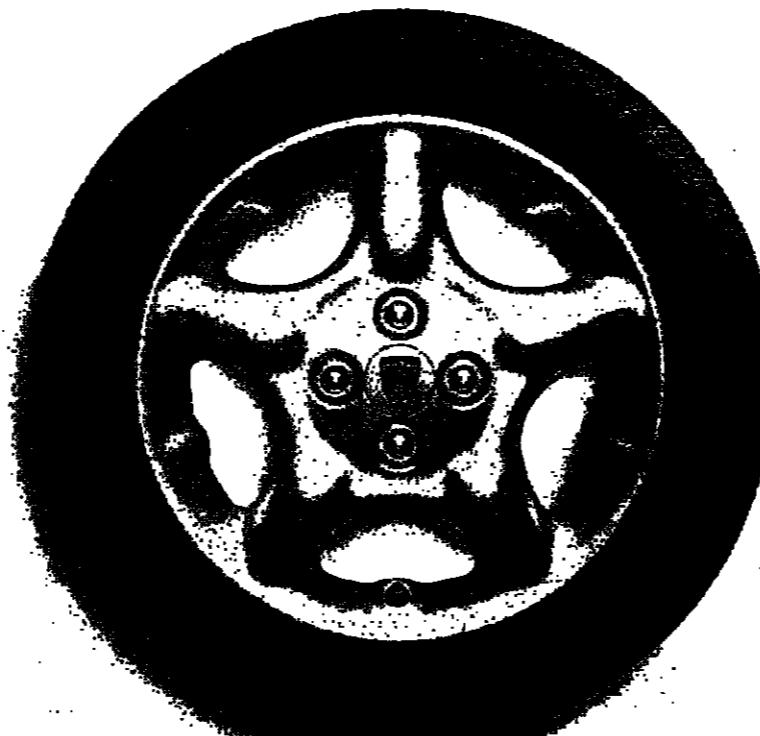
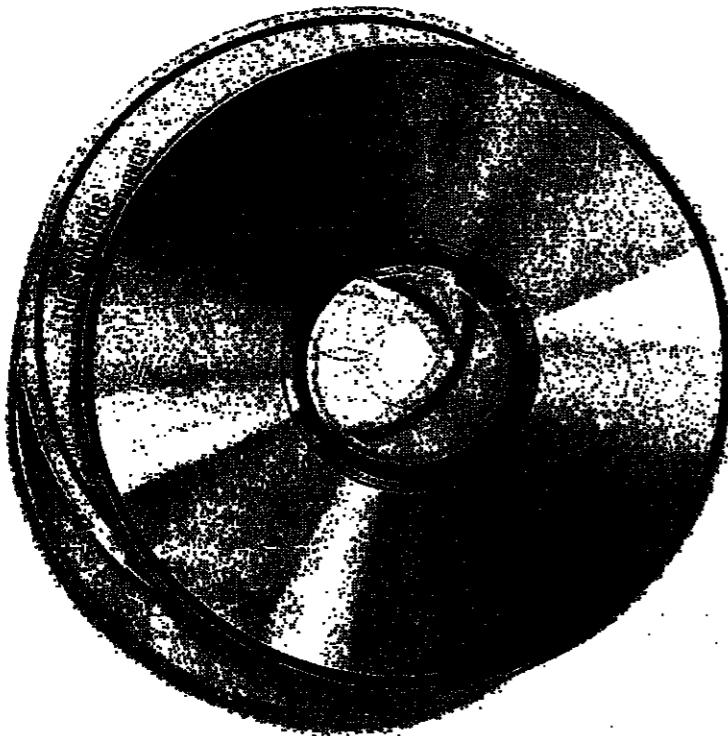
Some believe that the appointment last year of two new judges to the 10-member Goncourt committee injected a degree of surprise and openness into an increasingly stuffy and incestuous process.

The award of last year's prize to Andrei Makine, a Russian

who has since been granted French citizenship, was particularly controversial. Not only was he a Russian writing in French, but he had already been named winner of the Medici prize for the same novel, *The French Testament*, and the Goncourt had always stood out against sharing prize-winning novels.

If the attitude of the committee has started the change, the value of the prize has not. It remains at a paltry 50 francs, far outweighed by the prestige to the writer of winning and the certainty that sales of the winning novel will soar. A Prix Goncourt can still make or break a publishing house.

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CRISIS IN AFRICA

Zaire aid fails to reach lost and hungry

David Orr

Kinshasa

Despite high hopes that the first aid deliveries would start reaching refugees in Zaire, political blockages and bureaucratic obstacles continue to impede the aid agencies.

Yesterday the humanitarian organisations were still engaged in frustrating talks in Kinshasa with the Zairean government about the delivery of supplies to the most needy areas. Large numbers of desperate refugees are understood to be gathered around the town of Lubutu, to the east of Kisangani, which is set to become the centre for the growing aid operation.

"The Zairean government is making things difficult for the aid agencies because they are afraid they'll freeze the refugee problem for good," said one Western diplomat in Kinshasa.

The Zaireans want the refugees to go back to Rwanda, not to settle even deeper inside Zairean territory.

But there is another problem. Almost one month after eastern Zaire's refugees started fleeing their camps - and one week after the first reports that they are dying of disease, hunger and thirst - there is still no certainty as to where most of them are.

More than 1 million Rwandan and Burundian refugees, as well as countless thousands of displaced Zaireans, have been driven deep into the inhospitable interior of Zaire by fighting raging in the east of the country.

In the forests and among the hills of one of Africa's remotest regions, they are still beyond the reach of the international aid agencies.

"We hope to have a better idea of their location by the end of the week," said Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"A large concentration from

one camp has been spotted from the air but we don't know where most of them are. We can't say for certain if they are dying in large numbers but we know their food probably ran out at the end of last week."

Having escaped the fighting between the Zairean army and the rebels who have now taken control of much of the east, the fleeing mass of humanity is now prey to the degradations of bureaucracy.

Aid convoys which crossed from Rwanda into eastern Zaire were yesterday stalled as negotiations continued between aid officials and rebel leader, Laurent Kabila.

The rebels were insisting that their authority in the region be recognised by the United Nations before the distribution of food and blankets could begin.

"The number of refugees who have emerged around Goma saying they are prepared to be repatriated to Rwanda can be counted in hundreds," said Mr de Mello.

"There are also some need civilians in the town; the situation in Butavu is much more serious: there's no food or medical supplies and there are lots of wounded."

The cross-border relief effort is for the moment largely symbolic. The far greater need is beyond Goma and Butavu, which they are deep in the heart of Zaire.

But the Zairean government is insisting that supplies must be shipped through the capital, Kinshasa, in the far west of the country.

Though they have lost control of their eastern border region, the Zairean authorities are insisting that aid organisations must not contravene Zairean sovereignty by dealing with the insurgents.

"It's all a bit of a mess," said one aid official in Kinshasa.

The aid operation in the east, with the UN talking to the rebels, has put the Zairean

government in a difficult position. I don't think the government is going to be so stupid as to punish the aid organisations but they're unlikely to give immediate approval for a full scale aid effort. They'll probably just approve a bit at a time."

Most of Zaire's missing refugees are Rwandans, members of the country's Hutu majority, who fled their country after at least half a million Tutsis were massacred by Hutu militias in 1994.

They crossed the border to escape advancing Tutsi rebels who put an end to the genocide and formed a new government in Rwanda.

The refugees were again put to flight last month as fighting flared between the Zairean army and Tutsi guerrillas in eastern Zaire.

A UNHCR and United Nations World Food Programme mission is due to arrive in Kisangani today to assess the security situation and humanitarian needs.

So far, no refugees are understood to have reached Kisangani, which has been badly looted by retreating Zairean troops. The International Committee of the Red Cross has got clearance to deliver a small shipment of supplies to Kisangani today, but not yet to deliver aid to the displaced people beyond the town.

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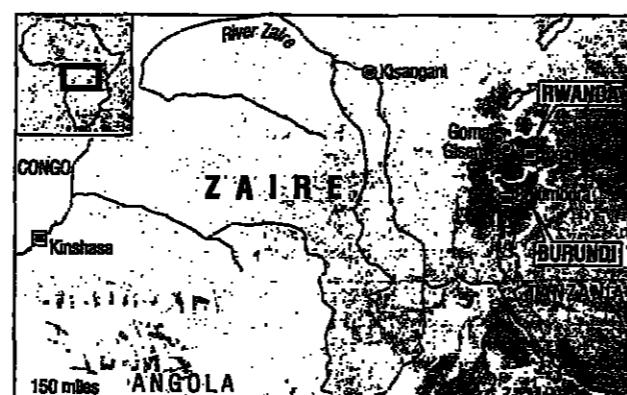
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Stand-off: Zairean students expelled from their university stand at a gate at Our Lady of Kinsasa Cathedral. The troops forced those with no homes in the capital to gather there

Photograph: Reuter



Map: AP

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Canada attempts to regain peace image

Making amends for the Somalia mess is not the only motive for sending soldiers to Africa again, writes Hugh Winsor

Ottawa — The Canadian Government, anxious to regain the initiative in United Nations peace-keeping operations and to take advantage of its experience in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, has offered to take the lead role in organising a small military force to act as a disaster-assistance response team in eastern Zaire.

The Canadian forces are prepared to send a lightly armed mobile unit of French-speaking officers with previous UN peace-keeping operations in Rwanda immediately as a vanguard unit for a larger UN force.

The Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, contacted 15 world leaders over the weekend, urging support for such a force. Prime Minister Chrétien decided that the urgency of the situation required some action, a spokesman for the Foreign Affairs Department said yesterday.

The Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, called off a visit to Cairo for a Middle East economic conference in order to work full-time on the force.

The Canadian motivation is a mixture of altruism and a desire to refurbish a reputation for UN peace-keeping that was stained by several incidents in Somalia.

In one case, a group of Canadian soldiers tortured and beat to death a 16-year-old Somali youth caught attempting to steal from the Canadian compound. There were also two questionable shooting incidents in which Somalis were killed.

Canada's record on UN peace-keeping goes back to the aftermath of the Suez Crisis in

1956. Lester Pearson, then Secretary of State for External Affairs and later Prime Minister, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for initiating the UN peace-force concept.

That Canadian forces operate in both French and English is seen as an advantage in this part of Africa. Also, Canadian generals commanded the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (Unamir) force in Rwanda during the upheaval in 1994. The current initiative is also related to frustrations left from that period when Canadian commanders wanted to increase the Unamir force and intervene to stop the killings. Instead, the Security Council reduced the Unamir force and UN headquarters ordered the peace-keepers not to intervene.

Apart from political motivations, the Canadian government has also come under pressure from several of the Canadian-based humanitarian agencies which played key roles in the Zairean refugee camps before they were forced to flee by the current fighting.

Canadian missionary organisations, especially the Roman Catholic White Fathers, have been active in the area, founding a university in Rwanda, for instance. They have links both with the refugees and the current leadership in both Rwanda and Burundi.

There is also a desire to back up the work of Raymond Chrétien, the Prime Minister's nephew, who has been designated the special envoy of the UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, and who is now in Kinshasa.

Canada's initial group would be an advance team of 180 to 200 men specialising in communications, a mobile field hospital and a water-purification system. Unconfirmed reports said Canada was prepared to commit up to 1,500 troops but was counting on help from other Western countries, especially the United States, which has the airlift capacity to get the Canadians with their equipment and their Grizzlies, lightly armoured wheeled scout cars, to Goma quickly. The Canadian contingent to Unamir created an extensive microwave-communications network in Rwanda which can be reactivated and extended into Zaire.

Boutros: Twelve nations to join forces

Rome (Reuter) — Canada was ready to lead a multinational force in Zaire, the United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, said yesterday, adding that he was optimistic progress was being made to end an "intolerable" tragedy. He expected more than 12 countries would make up the Canadian-led force, and hoped the United States would provide logistical support.

He had been in contact with Canada's Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien. "I express my gratitude to Canada. Canada has accepted to command these multinational forces ... Canada is a very neutral country."

Mr Boutros-Ghali said South Africa's President, Nelson Mandela, and some European states, including Italy, had also agreed in principle to commit troops to a humanitarian force.

"We are in contact with Canada, Italy, France, Spain and we hope also to have logistical support from the United States." The size of the force had not been decided but Mr Boutros-Ghali said: "People are talking of between 10,000 and 12,000."

Mr Boutros-Ghali said he was confident a Canadian-led force, with African participation, would prove acceptable to Rwanda's Tutsi-led government, which has refused to agree to leadership from Paris.

It says French troops sent in 1994 to help end genocide protected Hutus blamed for the slaughter.

France has pushed hardest for troops to be sent to Zaire to open humanitarian corridors to get food and water to starving Rwandan and Burundian refugees and displaced Zaireans. The French have attacked the US for dragging its feet.

Britain has said it will take a preliminary decision in the next "couple of days" on whether to contribute personnel to a proposed humanitarian force in Zaire. "It looks likely that there will be an international force and there will be interest here in contributing to it if we can (and) if there is a workable military plan."

Spain's Foreign Minister, Abel Matutes, said the UN might give a green light within 48 hours to the deployment of a multinational force in Zaire.

Spain is prepared to send 300 soldiers and will consider whether to send more later on. The troops would secure humanitarian corridors to help distribute aid.

In Nairobi, Kenya's Foreign Minister, Kalonzo Musyoka, said he planned to visit Zaire's ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko, who is convalescing at his villa in Nice, France, after treatment in Switzerland for prostate cancer.

The Organisation of African Unity's Committee for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution met on Monday in Addis Ababa and said it regretted the UN Security Council had not deployed a neutral multinational force, as urged by an African summit last week in Nairobi.



Mobutu: Still convalescing in villa in France

France moves troops to Congo

Force ready to cross river if needed to protect French citizens in Kinshasa

are separated by the River Zaire.

Tension has been mounting in Kinshasa over the past two weeks since news struck home of a humiliating defeat of Zairean soldiers by Rwandan-backed ethnic Tutsi rebels in the east of the country.

Rebellions students allied to the radical opposition have been demonstrating in a campaign to topple the Prime Minister, Kengo wa Dondo, who is part Tutsi and whose government is accused of doing too little in the face of the rebellion.

No official comment was immediately available from French embassies in Kinshasa or Brazzaville. The twin cities

diedents were killed in clashes with security forces.

Angry students briefly occupied parliament and paraded the coffins of their fallen comrades. Authorities reacted on Sunday by shutting two flashpoint campuses in Kinshasa. Troops drove out students at gunpoint before dawn on Monday. A leading student activist, Steve Mbokayi, said yesterday that the suspension of the deadline for Mr Kengo's resignation was tactical.

"We are waiting to negotiate with the government to reopen two colleges that were shut down at the weekend. When they were kicked off the campuses, many of the students had nowhere to go to."

Once they are back on campus we will continue the struggle," Mr Mbokayi said.

Boutros
Twelve
nations
to join
forces

A long, hard week for Major and the Eurocrats

The good news is that British employees will now benefit from a law that enables them to stick to a sensible working week, without the risk of being sacked, and have proper paid holidays. The bad news is that the European Commission is introducing this legislation in the wrong way, and thereby undermining the pro-European argument in Britain.

Paid holidays and shorter working hours are good for our wellbeing, and therefore a social good, too. You can't be pro-family (as many Tories would claim to be) and at the same time object to the substance of this law.

Yesterday, the European Court of Justice stamped on John Major's objections and ruled that the new directive on working time is legitimate European health and safety legislation. Britain cannot opt out. These entitlements – a reasonable amount of time off work to lead a normal family and social life – ought to be unexceptionable in a modern, civilised economy. Children rarely get a glimpse of parents working long hours, domestic relationships suffer under the strain, and our national quality of life deteriorates. All work and no play (or rest) makes Jack a dull boy, Jill a tired mum, and John a shallow and grumpy husband. The argument that we need to work

longer and longer hours to compete with low-paid workers in undeveloped economies holds no water: their workers will no doubt raise their social expectations as they get richer.

There are those who thrive on stress, who enjoy nothing more than working, and who cannot think of better ways to spend their time. They will still be allowed to work longer hours if they wish. Indeed, the effect of the legislation is likely to be largely symbolic – a signal to employers that an excessively zealous work ethic may damage creativity, good working relations, and ultimately productivity and commitment. Unions will be in a far stronger position negotiating hours and annual holidays for vulnerable workers. So if the Government had introduced this legislation of its own volition, we would have applauded it.

John Major's government, obsessed with deregulation and intimidated by employers, does not appreciate that social legislation is a necessary function of government in a competitive market economy. The business demand for zero interference is absurd. There is a necessary tension between the business world's wish to be left unfettered in its search for profit, and any government's proper role, which is to create a climate for competitive business while meeting social expectations.

Companies that are competitive purely on the basis of pushing hard-pressed employees beyond sensible physical limits are not helping the wider social world. Indeed, it is not mainly their business to care about the wider social world. That is one reason we have governments, rather than corporations, to run our lives: to look after our non-profit oriented interests.

It even makes sense for European countries to introduce such social legislation together, if they can agree. But there is no excuse for disingenuous social legislation like this as a health

and safety matter. By levering it in through the back door, the European Union risks discrediting its legislative process.

The Commission argued (and the European Court agreed) that long hours are bad for our health, and that restricting them is therefore legitimate health and safety legislation. The premise may well be true. But who can tell what the optimal number of hours worked may be? Is 48 hours monitoring a building site as bad for our health as 48 hours carrying bricks, or 48 hours spent at head office worrying about whether bud-

gets could be met? (Irrelevantly, but interestingly, how does a 60-hour week in a calm, friendly office compare with a dawn-to-dusk week at home on your own in a small house looking after several small children?)

Moreover, the European governments who backed the original proposal have undermined the force of their argument by their own exemptions. If working more than 48 hours really is so bad for our health, and if the European Union has our health so much at heart, why are so many workers excluded? The health of doctors and transport workers is no less important than the health of everyone else. If these people are so readily exempt, then presumably the rigid 48 hours is not so important to our health after all, in which case it should not be a part of health and safety legislation.

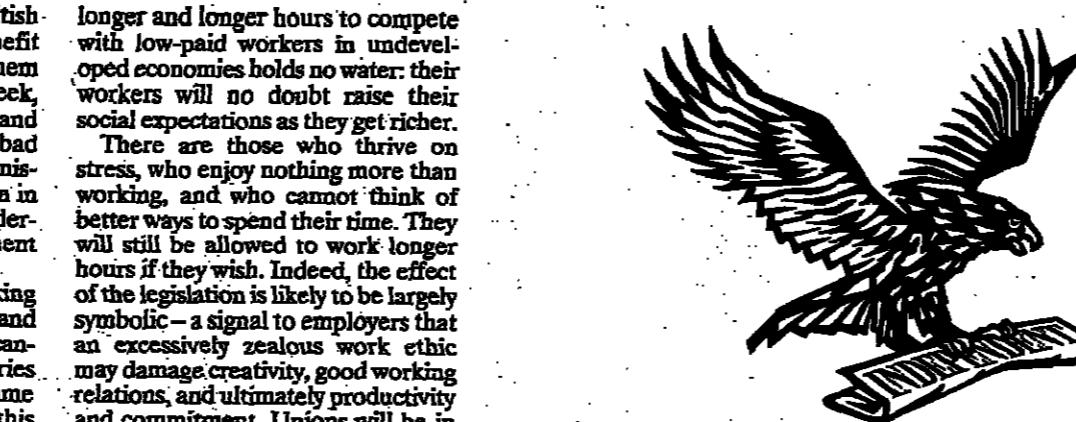
Indeed, one of the groups specifically excluded, doctors in training, have one of the best health and safety cases of all for a limit on working hours: a bad diagnosis by an exhausted casualty doctor who has spent 24 hours on his or her feet could be fatal.

The Conservative Party will make much of today's decision in the run-up to the election. It is evident, they will say, that our European partners want to meddle destructively in our lives. But Mr Major should be care-

ful how he plays this issue. Voters may accept, when they hear all the arguments, that Europe should not be interfering and imposing itself in this way. But will overworked people want to vote for a party that specifically rejects employment protection? If Mr Major thinks his stance will only win him votes he should think again. Perhaps his judgment is awry. Perhaps he is working unduly long hours.

Seventies nosh the new rock 'n' roll

Cocktailed prawns are making a comeback. According to *EurSoap*, the latest magazine from the *Leaded Stable*, Seventies food is in. The New Lads to which the magazine is appealing can drool over top chefs coquing the vin, orangizing the duck and trifling the sherry. Well it's a start, lads. At least they have graduated from beef burgers, and take-away curries with six-packs. But they haven't quite grown up yet, if they are yearning for the food their parents prepared at dinner parties. What next, though, for the boys before the boozier? Cheese and wine? Fondue sets? Let's hope they never have to sink so low as a spattering of pesto.



ONE CANADA SQUARE CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 071-293 2000 / 071-345 2000 FAX 071-293 2435 / 071-345 2435

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What the Lib Dems need from Labour

Sir: John Rentoul ("Blair to come out for voting reform", 11 November) should not get too excited. The sort of practical cooperation he describes between Liberal Democrats and Labour is a sensible means to the efficient conduct of business and happens between more parties and at more times than the public is ever likely to be told about.

At present the muffled drumbeat of Labour retreats on such issues as devolution, a Bill of Rights, minimum sentences, and now the Social Chapter, is doing nothing to encourage Liberal Democrats to make that collaboration any closer. As a party we do not regard the Alternative Vote as a proportional system and it is unlikely that any Labour commitment to it would change our inclinations.

Our position remains as stated by Paddy Ashdown at Brighton: "Nothing ruled in and nothing ruled out." As to how we might apply that position, Shirley Williams at Brighton said that our bare minimum terms for closer cooperation should be a fully proportional system of voting and a massive increase in funding for education. The electric enthusiasm which greeted that remark is something from which Tony Blair should take warning.

EAR RUSSELL
(Liberal Democrat Social Security Spokesperson)
House of Lords
London SW1

Sir: I was interested to read John Rentoul's story that Tony Blair attended a birthday party at my house in February.

I would like to use your columns to reassure my family and many friends, who may be offended that they were not invited to this event, that no such party took place.

RHON PADDY ASHDOWN MP
(Tory, Liberal Democrat)

House of Commons

London SW1



David Brown 1996

Pernicious attack on Saro-Wiwa

Sir: What Richard D North is saying about Ken Saro-Wiwa and Shell ("Can you be sure of Ken Saro-Wiwa?", 8 November) can be refuted by those who know the facts – as your correspondents demonstrate (letters 11 November). What he is doing is far more pernicious.

When an investigative journalist builds a career on the fearless uncovering of official secrets; when a research scientist blows the whistle on dangerous pollutants or unexpected threats to health; when a politician spends years in the wilderness nursing his reputation for honesty; watch them. Their records make us trust them.

When the journalist exposes fellow campaigners as frauds; when the scientist endorses procedures others are warning against; when the politician claims a sensitive inquiry producing an anti-democratic report, our trust in them as individuals may lead us to accept their word.

The day when the polluter starts paying has to come: like death, it is inevitable – because death is the alternative.

Richard D North and his ilk are being paid to postpone it.

ROSALINDA JONES
York

Heseltine behind metric chaos

Sir: Your correspondent Chris Keenan (letter, 7 November) blames metric middle at the supermarket.

In the mid-1960s the government created the Metrification Board to smooth the transition from imperial to metric measurements.

By dint of a little hedge here and a little encouragement there, the board persuaded industry to change, and indeed the pharmaceutical and building industries (among others) did so, in such a manner as not to cause trouble to the public.

At the beginning of the Thatcher years, Michael Heseltine, who disapproved of quangos, abolished the Metrification Board in order to save a little money. The expensive chaos that your correspondent describes is the result.

DAVID MARKS
London W13

Sir: Chris Keenan (letter, 7 November) has unfortunately mixed up metrication with unit pricing – an easy mistake to make.

Metrication has required that all pre-packed goods have to be sold in metric measures within supermarkets. Products sold loose, such as off the delicatessen counter, can continue to be sold in imperial units until 1 January 2000.

We should have introduced unit pricing into the United Kingdom in the middle of this year, and this would have required products to be sold in standardised packs, or for information to be carried on shelf-edge labels which indicated the price per 100 grams or 100 millilitres. Somerfield Stores' shelf-

edge labels carry this information. Unfortunately, much of industry was not as well organised, and as a result unit pricing was pushed back and the exact timetable is still a matter for debate.

STEPHEN R RIDGE
Quality Assurance Executive
Somerfield Stores
Bristol

Best way to help Zaire refugees

Sir: As a medical doctor and aid worker who has experienced more than 10 wars around the world, I want as much as anyone to see relief brought to the 700,000 refugees in Goma, Zaire.

But the international community faces a dilemma. A quick fix that freezes the situation and recreates the refugee camps will just cause another conflict and crisis in a few months' or a year's time.

Any international intervention must have two objectives: the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the safe return of these refugees to Rwanda.

This will require courage from the politicians, and careful operational planning to encourage the return of the refugees. But if the painful facts are not faced, if the camps are simply recreated, many more people will die.

JOHN HOWARTH
Medical Director
MERLIN (Medical Emergency Relief International)

London W1

Millennium dome will pollute sky

Sir: An illuminated dome is being planned to hold the millennium exhibition at Greenwich, the theme of which is "time" (report, 1 November).

Greenwich has been chosen as it is considered the most significant place to deal with this theme. Greenwich is also the historical centre of astronomy in the UK, time and astronomy being inextricably linked.

Astronomers are fighting a rearguard action to defend as much of the night sky from light pollution as possible. By the end of next century there may be nowhere in this country where one can see the great beauty of the sky.

London is not rural England, but I have observed from Essex and Hertfordshire, and if claims about this dome are true, these environments will be affected. I would prefer the dome were not built, but if it is built I hope it will be lit up for the year 2000 party and not illuminated again until the year 3000.

DAVID WAKEFIELD
Leeds, West Yorkshire

Sinn Fein's vote

Sir: According to Jack O'Sullivan ("My movie, right or wrong", 7 November), Neil Jordan claims that "in the 1918 general election Sinn Fein won 80 per cent of the vote". In *European Political Facts*

1918-84 (Macmillan 1986) Chris Cook and John Paxton state that (in the undivided Ireland) Sinn Fein received 496,961 votes, or 47.5 per cent of the total cast, with Unionists receiving 298,726 (28.5 per cent) and Nationalists 233,690 (22.3 per cent).

As Ireland then used the first-past-the-post electoral system, Sinn Fein did come first in 73 of the 105 Irish constituencies, as well as the Unionists and four by the Nationalists.

But as the turn-out was only 54 per cent, Sinn Fein actually received the support of 25.7 per cent of the electorate of Ireland, against 15.4 per cent for the Unionists and 12 per cent for the Nationalists.

Jordan may be bundling Sinn Fein and the Nationalists together and claiming 80 per cent support for Sinn Fein in what, three years later, was to become the Irish Free State.

ROGER BROAD
London W2

John Patten's pygmyist

Sir: If I were a pygmy, John Patten's article supporting Mr Said's "gift" to the University of Oxford would make me awfully cross ("Lucre made the spires what they are", 9 November).

Queen Victoria saw fit to graciously receive pygmies at her court. Yet Mr Patten now uses the word "pygmy" as a term of abuse for his former colleagues, friends and constituents within the university. Should this not be looked into by the Race Discrimination people?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a pygmy is a member of a dwarf race existing in Central Equatorial Africa, and is also applied to chimpanzees and other anthropomorphised apes.

ANTHONY O'CONNOR
Finstock, Oxfordshire

Moon beats stamp

Sir: The Treskilling Yellow stamp is reported to be listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as "the most valuable object of any type by weight, volume and density" (9 November).

This may be true in the realm of manufactured objects. Surely the most valuable substance in the world is iron out of this world – Moon rock. It took half a million scientists, technologists and engineers 10 years to bring pieces of rock from the Moon to the Earth at a cost of billions of dollars, consuming the best brains of two superpowers.

PETER STOCKILL
Middlestock, Cleveland

Spitfires at 16

Sir: Clare Garner writes on young boys who volunteered under age for service during the 1914-18 war (report, 11 November). This also happened during the 1939-45 war.

I served as a fighter pilot flying Spitfires during 1944-45. We had several pilots who were only 18 or 19, and, taking into account the time it took to train a pilot, they must have enlisted when they were 17 or 18 in some cases.

On VE Day we had one who was a flight commander at 19. He was one of the "old hands" of the squadron, having been on "Ops" for about 15 months and been decorated. The *Guinness Book of Records* reveals an RAF pilot flying Spitfires on "Ops" at the age of 16. I am sure there were many more.

M GRUERON
Reading, Berkshire

Quiet irony

Sir: At exactly the time when much of the nation fell silent for two minutes on 11 November, the lead item on the 11am news on BBC Radio 4 reported British success in gaining a huge contract for Hawk jets, including more to Indonesia.

LYNN TEN KATE
Crookham Village, Hampshire

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.
(Fax 071-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk)

E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Thorpe's friends – and a murder conspiracy

Jeremy Thorpe's trial in 1979 shocked the nation. Jason Thompson evaluates the man and his life in the light of new evidence

On a rainy night in October 1975, two men drove along a lonely coastal road in Exmoor. Inside their yellow Mazda was a Great Dane called Rinka. The car stopped. Both men got out and Rinka jumped around in anticipation of her walk. One of the men pulled out a Mauser pistol and shot the Great Dane dead. "You can't involve Rinka!", her owner shouted. "You can't involve the dog". As the owner tried to give his beloved pet the kiss of life, the gunman levelled his weapon and pulled the trigger. The gun jammed. He kept trying but the gun would not fire, so he jumped into the car and sped away from the scene.

One night 21 years later, film director Roy Ackerman was woken at his home by a bang on the door. It was Andrew Newton, the man who shot Rinka, arriving unannounced in response to months of phone calls and meetings with enigmatic go-betweens. After three hours of conversation, Newton agreed to tell his story of being hired to kill Rinka's owner Norman Scott – Jeremy Thorpe's former lover.

The bizarre and astonishing series of events that led to the downfall of the dazzling Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe have never been fully explained. In 1979, Thorpe and his co-defendants went on trial at the Old Bailey for conspiring to murder Norman Scott. They were found not guilty. But in a Channel 4 *Secret Lives* documentary, broadcast next week, new evi-

dence from surviving witnesses suggests that a conspiracy did exist – and that it involved close friends and colleagues of the Liberal leader.

Jeremy Thorpe was a man of fascinating contradictions, balancing social ambitions with radical idealism. He was the son of a Tory MP, but it was the minority Liberal party that fired the young Thorpe's imagination. A passionate advocate of human rights causes such as apartheid and immigration, he mixed in aristocratic circles and his second marriage, in 1973, was to the Queen's cousin, Marion Harewood. In the era of Carnaby Street, Thorpe wore a three-piece suit, watch chain and trilby. Yet it was this Edwardian dandy who was to modernise the party, targeting marginal seats and exploiting new technology. He used helicopters and hovercrafts to conquer the remote constituency of North Devon, becoming an MP in 1959.

But away from the political stage, Thorpe was also a man with homosexual tendencies at a time when homosexual practices were still illegal. Political culture in the early 1960s was dominated by the Profumo affair, and fears that the British state could be jeopardised by its ministers' sexual indiscretions. Thorpe's encounter in 1961 with a stable groom, Norman Scott, was to determine the rest of his life. Feeling protective of the handsome young man, he suggested that Scott contact him should he need help. Scott visited Thorpe at Westminster and maintains that a sexual relationship began that night.

Thorpe denies the affair took place, but his letters testify to intimacy. One refers to Scott affectionately as "Bunnies", and concludes: "I miss you".

Thorpe had chosen a dangerous lover: Scott had a history of mental illness. After the affair cooled, an outburst in public that he wanted to kill Thorpe brought him to the attention of the Chelsea police. Scott gave a statement alleging an affair. In a 1979 LWT film, Inspector Robert Huntley explains that the inquiry was abandoned because the police suspected that Thorpe would simply issue a denial.

Scott was determined to be heard – by anyone who would listen. He pestered Thorpe to return his national insurance card, without which he could not get a job. He even sent his story to Thorpe's mother.

Thorpe turned for help in containing this persistent threat to close friend Peter Bessell.

Thorpe, whose wit and charm inspired ferocious loyalty, had, according to Bessell, confided his homosexuality to his fellow West Country Liberal MP. Bessell was excited by the drama of his glamorous colleague's emerging crisis. At Thorpe's bidding, he kept Scott at bay in a cover-up that lasted 10 years. Bessell tried to find Scott a job abroad. He met the Social Services minister to resolve Scott's national insurance problems, and went to see the Home Secretary to request that the police were no longer investigating him. He sent Scott money, describing the pay-offs as "retainers".

Meanwhile Thorpe's star was rising. In 1967, still only 38, he became party leader and was made a Privy Counsellor by his friend Harold Wilson. An internal Liberal party inquiry in 1971 concerning Scott's allegations came to nothing and at the General Election in February 1974 the Liberals won six million Liberal votes – the party's highest share for half a century. Edward Heath invited Thorpe to Downing St. A coalition government would have won Thorpe a cabinet post. But party members were appalled by the idea of supporting the Conservatives, and without party backing a coalition was impossible. Still, Thorpe had taken his party to the peak of its post-war fortunes.

It was also in 1974, however, that Thorpe's private life caught up with him. In January, Bessell fled the country in financial ruin. Needing a new minder, Thorpe turned to another close friend, Liberal deputy treasurer David Holmes. Holmes died in 1990, but is heard in the film describing Thorpe's obsession with the ever-loquacious Scott: "It gave Jeremy the sense of permanent persecution – that I will never be safe while that

man is around". Holmes paid Scott £2,500 for a cache of what he believed to be incriminating letters, which he burned in a friend's Aga. But the measure was not enough to silence Scott.

Drastic action was needed. Holmes says that a plot was then hatched to frighten Scott into silence, and that Thorpe knew about it. Holmes contacted a business associate, John Le Mesurier, who recalls a conversation with Holmes: "David felt that this man Scott ... is just a lunatic and to get rid of him ... would be like getting rid of a mad dog." Le Mesurier was appalled by the suggestion, made by Thorpe's barrister at the trial, that Thorpe's co-defendants might have acted independently of him: "Scott wasn't annoying me ... and he wasn't annoying David. The only person he was causing great distress to, directly, was Jeremy Thorpe."

Through an intermediary,

Holmes and Le Mesurier hired Andrew Newton, a domestic airline pilot with a reputation as a maverick. Newton says on camera that Holmes hired him to kill Scott. In a taped telephone conversation, Holmes accepts Newton's fear that they might be

faced by a charge of "conspiracy to murder".

It was not the shooting that ended Thorpe's career, however, but the money that paid for it. The original – entirely innocent – source was philanthropist Sir Jack Hayward, now owner of Wolverhampton Wanderers. Hayward donated hundreds of thousands of pounds to the Liberal party. A year before the shooting, Thorpe asked Hayward to settle election expenses through a special route, in the form of two cheques to the unwitting Jersey-based businessman Nadir Dinshaw.

Thorpe used one of these sums to buy Scott's letters. It was this misuse of party funds that caused David Steel to demand Thorpe's resignation.

Newton's trial in March 1976 for the shooting allowed the press to report Scott's allegations. In May, Thorpe resigned the leadership. When, in October 1977, Newton sold his story to the Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Thomas Hetherington, ordered the police to reopen their investigation. On August 2, 1978, Thorpe was arrested and charged.

Accused, accuser and victim (clockwise from above left): the dandy, Jeremy Thorpe; the alleged intended victim, Norman Scott; the gunman, Andrew Newton; and Rinka, Scott's dog shot by Newton

defence team now thinks this was unfair. Gereh Williams QC now comments that he found Bessell's evidence "curiously impressive", that it was unaffected by the newspaper contract and that Bessell "had genuinely come there to do his best to tell the truth."

Newton and Scott, the other two prosecution witnesses, were also heavily undermined. The judge dismissed Newton as a "clump". But new admissions suggest that Newton knew exactly what he was doing in his testimony, that his evidence would help the defence. Le Mesurier now says that Newton promised to "sort things out" in his Old Bailey testimony. Newton duly reduced the courtroom to laughter with a series of judicious responses under cross-examination, claiming CIA involvement in the affair and hurling his papers in the air.

Although Thorpe was acquitted, the trial ruined him and he never regained a position in public life. His political career has been further tormented by Parkinson's disease, diagnosed shortly after the trial when Thorpe was in his mid-50s. His booming voice and theatrical demeanour have shrunk away. He lives in London and Devon with his wife Marion. He was invited to participate in the film, but declined due to ill health.

What lessons can be drawn from this strange tale? Scott pursued his vendetta with such bitterness that it is at least partially comprehensible that Thorpe's friends might have wished to obtain his silence. It seems most unlikely that a homosexual party leader, even of the Liberal party, could have come out 20 years ago and survived. But it was not society that destroyed Thorpe – on the contrary, conservative social attitudes and the court's regard for Thorpe's social and political position did much to save him. Thorpe was destroyed by his own vanity. He was reckless. He relied heavily on his friends, but did not then honour them.

Yet he emerges as a charming and magnetic figure. Thorpe was brilliantly witty, often thoughtful and kind, and was that rare politician who made politics exciting. In his fallen humanity, his story resonates with pathos on a classical scale.

The writer is assistant producer of 'Secret Lives: Jeremy Thorpe'. To be broadcast at 9pm, Monday, 18 November, Channel 4.

Opera Week – and a bit of jazz on the side



Miles
Kington

This week, on Radio 3, has been Jazz Week. Hooray, I hear you all cry. Lots and lots of jolly jazz on Radio 3! Hours and hours of super syncopation. At last a sign that Nicholas Kenyon, the stern head of dear old Radio 3, has unbent to dear old jazz.

A sign, even, that he has learnt something about jazz, which did not seem to be the case last May. This was the time when I drew attention to a 15-minute programme on Radio 3 about Jelly Roll Morton which managed to make eight major errors

about him. Not eight major errors in the programme. Eight major errors in one 133-word paragraph, which included the presenter announcing one record and playing another, without anyone noticing that this had happened.

Nobody from Radio 3 wrote to contradict me, least of all to say sorry, so I take it that my count of eight major errors was correct. And if Nicholas Kenyon's crew can make so many errors about one jazz musician in one paragraph, just imagine how many major errors they can make in a Jazz Week!

Imagine the scope for wonderful mistakes in a seven-day period of jazz broadcasts. Hold on.

Let us look more closely at this "Jazz Week". Let us count up carefully the hours of broadcasting devoted to jazz on Radio 3 this week; the programme hours decorated by Radio 3 with the proud strapline JAZZ WEEK.

Hmm. I make it a total

of 940 minutes, which is to

say about 16 hours. Sixteen

hours of jazz. Well, that's not

impressive 13 hours or so.

bad, considering that our usual rotation consists of nothing but the occasional concert recorded by the tireless Derek Drescher, backed up by *Jazz Record Requests* on Saturday. Oh, and that programme that nobody listens to because it's far too late, *Jazz Notes*, at 00.30 hours (and which can be rather annoying waiting up for because they tend to change the announced contents).

Hold on a moment, though. They have marked *Jazz Record Requests* as part of JAZZ WEEK. What a cheek. The programme would be there anyway – it is broadcast every week, year in, year out (except when, as recently, it is cancelled to make way for live Wagner). Nothing special about *Jazz Record Requests*. You can't call it part of JAZZ WEEK.

And they have earmarked *Jazz Notes* as part of JAZZ WEEK. Oh, come on, fellows! *Jazz Notes* goes out the whole time, even if all the listeners are asleep. Subtract *Jazz Notes* and *Jazz Record Requests* from the total, and we get a less impressive 13 hours or so.

To put it another way, during the "special" Jazz Week, more opera than jazz is being put out on Radio 3. This is partly because this week's composers, Cherubini and Spontini, are opera composers, which does bump up the total, but mostly because every week on Radio 3 is Opera Week.

You have to designate a week Jazz Week to get eight or nine hours of music (just over an hour a day) but with no effort at all, you can get 14 hours of opera.

It's not a proper Jazz Week, even when you print JAZZ WEEK in capitals, and flexible slots like *Music Machine* and *In Time* are lent to jazz for one week only in order to make the figures look better.

It still doesn't add up to a jazz week, Mr Kenyon. You don't fool me, sir, even if you fool yourself. And I won't feel much different until you have a real Jazz Week or, even better, give instructions for *Jazz Notes* to be broadcast at a time when people are awake. Or, better still, until you cancel some Wagner to make way for jazz.

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obituaries / gazette

Peter Doig

In February 1972, the Parliamentary Labour Party was immersed in issues arising from the miners' strike. It was a fraught time. And not the least contentious issue was that of secondary picketing, and flying pickets at the power stations. Most of the trade union movement was behind the miners, and were pressuring their sponsored Labour MPs to support what much of the public perceived as all kinds of excesses. Not the least vocal was the Transport and General Workers Union.

It was typical of Peter Doig that, remaining true to what he was a lifelong member of the T&GWU and a member of the Labour Party since 1930, he should speak up on the floor of the House against secondary disputes and flying pickets. On 14 February, during the critical Emergency Powers debate, Doig said:

I remind the House that the Labour government delayed the closing of mines, created special development areas, introduced redundant payments and related supplements, as well as taking other steps, with miners' interests specially in mind.

But I am one of the few MPs, possibly the only MP on the Labour side, who believe that the emergency regulations are necessary. I believe that because the miners' strike is a strike of the miners' leaders and that it was their policy to stop all power stations from operating. This has nothing to do with one's views on whether pickets are working unlawfully or not. As I see it, when a union takes its members out on strike it is entitled to picket in order to prevent other people from doing strikers' jobs. It is also to try to influence other unions to join in. It is quite entitled to try to convince the trade unions that their members in other industries should support it.

What I do not believe is that it is entitled to picket other industries. Whether or not a power station is picketed is something for the power station workers to decide and not for people from outside the area altogether. The miners have no right at all to picket other industries without first consulting the other union involved. And it should be for the other union to make the decision.

Hardly to his surprise, Doig received a sternly worded letter from his T&GWU head office, pointing out that his comments were contrary to union policy; and, if he did not recant smartly, they would withdraw his union sponsorship – which would certainly have had the effect, at that time, of terminating abruptly Doig's time in Parliament.

But no threat even to his livelihood (for he had no private means), nor the fury of Jack

Jones in his heyday, could daunt Doig once he had made up his mind on what he deemed to be right. He penned a letter to Transport House, making it abundantly clear that he was a Member of Parliament and he would say and do what he believed to be right; and, that, if the union wanted to withdraw sponsorship, so be it.

I vividly remember Doig's passing me a xerox of the letter during a session of the Scottish Grand Committee. It was a humdinger. I took my hat off to his fortitude, knowing that he financially depended on being an MP and that he had not yet qualified for a parliamentary pension having been an MP for under 10 years.

Doig's increasingly left-wing constituency Labour Party was pretty wedged, and some snared. They hesitated at de-selection attempts, since Doig had proved himself an immensely caring and effective MP for the people of Dundee, particularly the disadvantaged, and his removal would quite certainly have meant that Dundee West would follow Dundee East, held by Gordon Wilson, leader of the SNP. For George Thomson (now Lord Thomson of Monifieth), from 1952 to 1972 the previous member for Dundee East, Doig was a "loyal and courageous colleague".

Peter Doig was born and brought up one of the four sons of a miner in Lochgelly, Fife, who was determined that none of his boys would follow him down the pit. He left Blackness School at 14, worked in bakeries and became a van driver.

The Second World War changed everything. He volunteered for the RAF, was put into transport and found himself at Stavanger in 1940, then at Ironfjord in Norway, making a lucky last-minute escape in a tub from the rapidly advancing Wehrmacht.

The following year Doig was to make an even luckier escape, this time from the Japanese. He was sent as despatch rider from northern Singapore to the Malayan coast, but the unit to which he was to deliver messages was cut off. They took to the sea in small boats – most were destroyed; Doig and his companions were set on fire, after which they were left for drowning by the attacking aircraft. By a series of miracles, which Doig often described to me after playing chess in the Commons chess room, under

the pictures of Balfour and Bonar Law, a quarter of a century later – he was a genuinely modest man – he was picked up by a cargo ship and reached the Indian coast. Then, sleeping on deck, he travelled home on the trotschip *Devonshire*, narrowly escaping U-boats. This experience was reflected in his political style: he always recognised that he was living on borrowed time, which gave him a perspective and objectivity which is rare among MPs.

Discharged in 1946, he returned to T.D. Duncan, the Dundee bakers soon to be swallowed up by Rank Hovis, and became a sales supervisor. Drawn into the Dundee Parliament, a famous old debating society, he acquired a taste for public affairs and was elected to Dundee Town Council in 1953. Success as an effective convenor of the Parks Department Committee, a reputation for severe probity and fearlessness in a city of colourful councillors and the support of the Juteworkers' Union led to his being chosen as City Treasurer.

His reputation was enhanced by a successful campaign against Lady Tweedsmuir in South Aberdeen in 1959 and the fact that he had forced the City Chamberlain against his will to take on the cosy oil cartels, and humiliate Shell into giving the City of Dundee a better deal.

In 1963 John Strachey suddenly died. Strachey was a heavyweight intellectual of the Left and had an international reputation. Dundee Labour Party decided that they wanted a candidate who was the opposite of Strachey and would pay attention to the city. This Doig did.

Doig has been lampooned for his constant attempts, starting in March 1969, to introduce protection from dogs legislation. "I seek in my Bill to achieve three things. First, that the warning be given on the outside gate 'Beware of the dog' or a similar notice. Secondly, that a letter-box should be provided on the outside gate by dog owners. Thirdly, to establish beyond all doubt the legal right of people to use an approved dog repellent in self-defence."

I know that more of my West Lothian constituents put pen to paper on Doig's dogs during the early 1970s than on the fact that I was one of 69 Labour MPs to go into the same lobby as Ted Heath on the momentous Eu-



Living on borrowed time: Peter and Emily Doig at the Palace of Westminster

ropean Community vote of 25 October 1971, or on my controversial views on the future constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom affecting Scotland. Doig also spoke his mind on devolution. On 10 January 1978, during the debate on the Scotland Bill, he said:

It would then be necessary to have customs officers not just on the border but at every airport, every railway station and every port. There would have to be customs officers at every one of these places immediately there was any considerable difference in the rate of taxation between England and Scotland.

The same sort of situation would arise if it were decided to change

the rate of income tax in Scotland. To higher in Scotland, what would be the first thing to happen? Taxation is based on where the head office of a company happens to be. In such an event head offices in Scotland would immediately pull out and transfer somewhere in England . . .

The same argument applies right through the rest of possible taxes. Without a customs commission, it would be utterly impossible to have separate rates if this sort. If we have them, we shall be heading for nothing but trouble. This idea is just sheer nonsense.

Peter Doig joined the SDP in 1981 and therefore does not qualify for a memorial encum from the Chairman of

the Parliamentary Labour Party at our Wednesday morning meetings. But he and his supportive wife Emily will remain in the memory of his contemporaries as a credit to the party of which they were members for over half a century.

Tan Dalyell

Peter Muir Doig, van driver and politician; born Lochgelly, Fife 27 December 1911; member, Dundee Town Council 1953-63, Treasurer 1959-63; MP (Labour) for Dundee West 1963-79; married 1938 Emily Scott (two sons); died Wormit, Fife 31 October 1996.



Graham: the male nude

Photograph: John Vere Brown

London's leading ceramic specialists. A little later they became aware that few galleries were prepared to show images of the male figure and were determined to fill the gap in the market. Gradually ceramics gave way to figurative art, chiefly, though not exclusively, of the male nude. The gallery established a reputation for old

Philip Graham

Philip Graham had, as a curator and gallery director, the ability to combine a talent for spotting young and promising artists with an academic knowledge of modern and 19th-century art.

This made him, like his late partner, Stephen Boyd, one of those rare creatures in the London art world – someone who was prepared to stand up for what he believed to be worthwhile and important, even if at times this brought the pair of them to the edge of penury. Graham's death at the age of 49 deprives the London art world of an insightful and often courageous curator.

This was not Graham's first career choice, though it had always had an interest for him. He was born in Derby, but his family emigrated to South Africa in 1948. After school, Graham's fine voice and theatrical ambitions pointed him in the direction of a career as an actor and singer, and he entered the drama department of the University of Cape Town. Following graduation, he decided that there were more likely to be opportunities for a young actor-singer in England, and he returned to London.

Modest parts as a singer and dancer came his way, but, after he met his lifelong partner Stephen Boyd, Graham's career took off in a new direction, when they started dealing in antiques. The two men, similar in age, were an almost perfect couple. Stephen small in stature, wiry, resilient and imaginative, Philip tall, equally slight, but with an acute understanding of the workings of the business side of the art market.

Eventually they moved out of London in the late 1970s, opening St Judes, a shop in Somerset specialising in ceramics with theatrical connections. In a relatively short period they built up one of the strongest collections in the country and later they extended their interests to 18th- and early 19th-century pottery and porcelain, again establishing a national reputation for high-quality work accurately attributed.

Confident of the market, in the mid-1980s Boyd and Graham opened a tiny shop and gallery, again named St Judes, at the north end of Kensington Church Street, becoming one of

the most popular art galleries in the up-and-coming area of Old Street, just round the corner from the *Independent's* old City Road offices, extending his brief to include artists such as Jacqueline Moreau and Sandra Fisher. Despite its tucked-away location, patrons found their way, and the gallery was able to survive, mounting one-person as well as themed shows. Increasing ill-health, combined with the trauma of Boyd's death in 1995, brought a temporary halt to the programme, and the gallery closed earlier this year.

Philip Graham achieved his ambition in setting up a gallery showing work which crossed the conventional boundaries of gay/straight, male/female, historical/modern, choosing work for its quality and style as well as its content. He and Stephen Boyd supported and encouraged each other in the "shark-infested waters" of art dealing, succeeded in maintaining a gallery few thought could survive, and did so with flair, wit and imagination.

Emmanuel Cooper

Philip Graham, gallery director and actor; born Shardlow, Derbyshire 24 July 1947; died London 19 October 1996.

Eugene Polyakov, ballet master, died Paris 24 October, aged 53. Trained at the Bolshoi Ballet, he left for Italy in 1973, and assisted Rudolf Nureyev at the Paris Opéra Ballet from 1983, remaining there until 1991.

Alexander d'Arbeloff, entrepreneur, died London 30 October, aged 101. An associate of Abel Gance in the 1920s, he made films, wrote novels and organised Paraguay's new road system in the 1930s.

Paula Hinton

Paula Hinton had two advantages which are rarely combined in a single dancer. She was not only fortunate enough to be born with a talent for drama and movement that made her one of ballet's finest actresses; she also married a successful choreographer, Walter Gore, who created many works for her.

She met Gore when both were dancers in Ballet Rambert. She had discovered ballet as a teenager in Liverpool when, acting in pantomime, she found herself admiring the ballet sections. She began ballet lessons locally, made her dance début at 12 as Helen of Troy in the Old Vic Company's *Tragedy of Faustus*, at the Liverpool Playhouse, and joined Ballet Rambert in 1944.

She was cast in small roles in ballets by Frederick Ashton, Antony Tudor and Frank Staff. But because of her psychological maturity she quickly progressed to bigger challenges

such as the Queen of the Wili in *Giselle* and the lead in *Gore's Plaisance*. Gore at the time was romantically attached to another dancer, Sally Gilmour, and when in 1948 he created *Winter Night* (during Rambert's Australian tour) for Gilmour, Hinton and himself, the ballet mirrored the real-life triangle of its interpreters.

The next year Gore married in 1950 and soon left Rambert for a freelance existence. Hinton guested with various companies, often in ballets by Gore; while Gore also accepted a succession of posts as ballet master abroad, and on two occasions launched his own

company in Britain – the Walter Gore Ballet (1953-55) and the London Ballet (1961-63).

It was an erratic life, but it did result in Hinton's dancing becoming widely viewed internationally. She appeared with a long list of companies: the glamorous Ballet des Champs-Elysées in Gore's *La Damné* (1951), the National Ballet of Australia, the Frankfurt Ballet, the Norwegian Ballet, the Harkness Ballet (USA), Ballet Rambert, and many others.

She also danced with Festival Ballet (now English National Ballet) in 1951, standing in for an indisposed Alicia Markova in *Giselle*. A role Markova had transformed into something of a spiritual monument. For Hinton not only had a potent attraction but also a remarkable physical facility that produced a floating lightness, high jump and exceptional speed. When she danced Folke's 1914 version of *The Golden Cockerel*

with the revived Original Ballet Russe, one critic wrote: "She made the cockerel inhuman, cold, avian, with that underlying cruelty which only a bird who pecks a king to death could have. Her variation in the first scene had the hard precision of a pair of scissars."

Hinton and Gore (who died in 1979) actually loved animals with a passion, especially birds, perhaps because they had no children. They used to care for sick birds, and one visitor to their London home was startled to find full of pigeons and their droppings. But they were also kindly towards their fellow dancers and devoted to each other. Hinton continued performing until 1976.

Nadine Meissner

Paula Hinton, ballet dancer; born Ilford, Essex 1 June 1924; married 1950 Walter Gore (died 1979); died Birkenhead, Cheshire 5 November 1996.

In assessing the amount by which a lump sum award of special damages for personal injuries, to cover loss of earnings and the cost of care over many years in the future, should be discounted to reflect the return obtainable from investing that lump sum, the court should assume the yield was that to be expected from prudent investment, namely 4 to 5 per cent per annum, rather than from index-linked government securities at only 3 per cent.

The Court of Appeal allowed appeals against quantum by the defendants in three personal injury cases in which liability was admitted.

In the first, Judge Wilcox, sitting as a deputy High Court judge on 13 June 1995, had awarded Thelma Wells £1,619m in damages against her husband, Derek Wells, following a road accident in which he was the driver. That award was reduced to £1,086m.

Lord Justice Eustace said that in these three cases the multiplier applied to the annual amount assessed for future losses and expenses (the multiplicand) had been set by ref-

erence to the expected three per cent return on index-linked government securities (ILGS), rather than the conventional rate was supported by the Law Commission in its report (No 24) *Structured Settlements and Interim and Provisional Damages*.

The advantages of ILGS were that the return was certain, interest and capital were protected against inflation, and the future was protected as securely as possible. Equities by contrast were risky and the return variable.

The basic rule, which had stood for over a century, was that damages were to be assessed on the basis that a plaintiff was entitled to invest at minimum risk and (ii) that the correct approach was not whether it would be prudent to invest in equities, but whether investing in ILGS would achieve the necessary object with the greatest precision.

The existing guidelines were still valid and their Lordships were not persuaded that a case had been made out for the courts of their own motion to adopt ILGS in their place. The present discount rate of 4 to 5 per cent should continue to apply.

Paul Magrath, Barrister

Damages assumed to be prudently invested

LAW REPORT

13 November 1996

who was born with cerebral palsy following maladministration of a drug to his mother during labour, damages of £1,285m against Brighton Health Authority. That award was reduced to a sum to be determined later.

In the third, Mr Justice Dyson on 4 December 1995 had awarded Kelvin Page £90,000 against his former employer, Sheerness Steel Co plc, following an accident at work in which he suffered brain damage. That award was reduced to £62,000.

John Leighton Williams QC, Richard Mathew (Linda Y. Olive, Worthing, Lawrence Graham) for Mr Wells; Thomas v Brighton Health Authority; Page v Sheerness Steel Co; Kieran Cooney QC, Christina Lamb (Hempsons) for Brighton H.; Christopher Purchas QC, George Godfrey (Waterston Hicks) for Mrs Wells; C. Purchas QC, Matthew Kelly (Russell Jones & Walker) for Page; Robert Owen QC, Philip Havers QC (Compton Carr) for Thomas.

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Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

In Berkhampstead on 10 November 1996 in her 101st year, Avey (Johnnie) Slater, much-loved widow of Jack and mother of John, former Conservative MP for Chelmsford, and Charles Cranston, Antwerp, on Monday 18 November at 11am. Family flowers only please but donations if desired to Barnardo's. All enquiries and donations can be made to Mrs Jeanne Jones & Metcalfe, 254 High Street, Berkhamsted, telephone 01442 29458.

For Genetic BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, please telephone 0171-253 2011 or fax 0171-293 2010.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen gives a luncheon for the President of the Royal Society. The Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, and the Princess Royal, and others attend at the Royal Society, London, on Friday 15 November.

Her Majesty the Queen presents a new Queen's Award for Research to the Woodland Trust, of Great Britain, and the Prince of Wales presents a Queen's Award for Enterprise to the Prince's Trust, of London.

Changing of the Guard

The Queen's Guards, Royal Household, London, 11am.

Obituary of Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of the Commonwealth, 1926

business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098

BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Nationwide signals end to mortgage war

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

One million homeowners will have to pay more for their mortgages from next month, following a decision yesterday by Nationwide Building Society to raise its standard lending rate by 0.25 per cent. The move signalled the first retreat in the mortgage war as the housing market recovers.

But the Nationwide opened up the competition on another front by raising the rates it pays to savers in a bid to win deposits next year from the building societies planning to convert to banks next year.

Nationwide's mortgage increase will add just under £7 to the monthly cost of a £50,000 repayment mortgage, although at £362.03 this will remain about £7 below the monthly payment charged by lenders such as Halifax or Barclays.

It plans to increase rates on a range of savings accounts by 0.1 to 0.25 per cent.

Other societies said yesterday that they had no plans yet to raise mortgage rates. Nationwide will still have one of the lowest variable rates on offer, at 6.74 per cent, as part of its policy of demonstrating the benefits of mutuality.

Philip Williamson, commercial director, said: "We have been looking after our million borrowers and now we want to look after the 6 million savers

a bit more." He said the society remained committed to returning £300m of profits to its members.

He pointed out that many savers locked into accounts with building societies planning to join the stock market would be able to move their investments during the next few months. Tens of billions of pounds worth of deposits are held in accounts qualifying for free shares at societies such as Halifax and Woolwich which are converting to banks next year.

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Other societies said they did not plan to raise their own mortgage and savings rates immediately. Birmingham Midshires last week raised its

mortgage rate by a quarter-point to 7.24 per cent.

"We have no plans at present to change although obviously we will have to remain competitive," a spokesman for the Woolwich said.

An Alliance and Leicester spokeswoman agreed. "Holding shares will give our members another stake in the organisation," she added.

David Charlton, a spokesman for the determinedly mutual

Skipton Building Society, said that although the Nationwide remained a good flagship for the sector, it was competing on two fronts. "They are playing in the mutual league, where some smaller societies are very ag-

gressive on savings rates, and in on a limb before yesterday's move. "It marks a recognition that the benefits of mutuality only go so far," he said.

Rob Thomas, building societys analyst at City bank UBS, said Nationwide had been out

enough deposits in the light of growing mortgage demand.

Its move follows the quarter-point increase in base rates to 6 per cent a fortnight ago.

Other lenders admit that they are likely to increase their mortgage rates if base rates rise again, but Mr Williamson said Nationwide would not necessarily do so.

Gary Marsh, director of strategy at Halifax, said another rise in base rates would make a mortgage increase more likely. But he denied this would halt the housing market recovery.

"One of the dangers in the housing market is of too sharp a recovery. In a sense we welcomed the psychological impact of the Chancellor's last move because what we want is a steady, sustainable recovery."

Official figures yesterday brought further evidence of the recovery. New housebuilding orders rose for the third quarter running in July-September - up 2 per cent on the previous quarter and 7 per cent on the same period a year ago.

£100 savings to generate windfall

Savers with the Woolwich and Halifax building societies will need to make sure they have a minimum balance in their accounts by the end of this year in order to make sure they do not miss out on their free shares when the two join the stock market next year, writes Diane Coyle.

Woolwich said yesterday that in order to qualify for the flat rate handout, likely to be worth £750, members would need to have a balance of at least £100 in qualifying accounts at midnight on 31 December. This would entitle them to vote at a special general meeting in February.

John Stewart, Woolwich group chief executive, said: "The Christmas period can be a busy one financially and I hope that this information will help members plan the use of their savings."

Savers would also need to have £100 in a qualifying account on 31 December last year. People who had at least £1,000 in their account on that date and who still have that amount at the time of the special general meeting will receive a variable payment in proportion to the size of their balance.

The society said the special meeting was expected to be held in February and larger

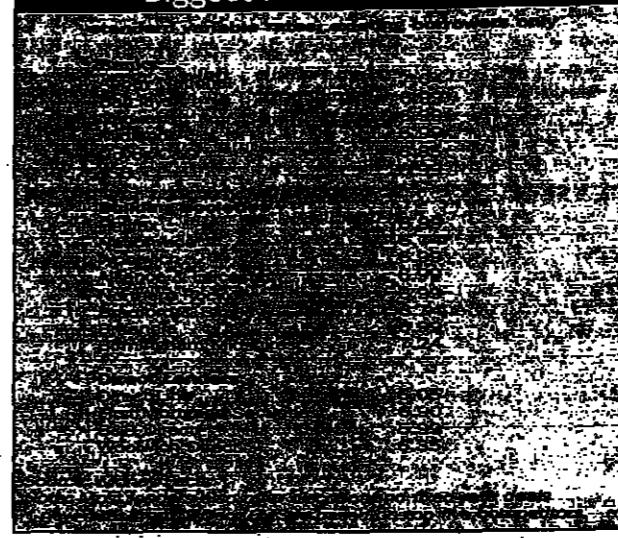
savers would be given 21 days' notice to top up their accounts back to the level they were at on 31 December 1995 in order to increase the size of their share handout.

Halifax will write to members with details of its requirements within the next two to three weeks.

In order to be eligible to vote at its February special meeting, savers will need to restore the balance in their accounts back to the December 1994 level.

That was when the news of the society's merger with Leeds Building Society and planned flotation first emerged.

Biggest and best lenders



British Gas abandons £1bn claim

Michael Harrison
and **Chris Godsmark**

British Gas suffered a double blow yesterday as it abandoned a £1bn compensation claim against the Government and a top executive in its pipeline business, TransCo, was forced to resign because of ill-health. The company said it had dropped its legal action against the Department of Trade and Industry for repayment of Gas Levy because it was satisfied the tax had been applied correctly.

The news came as TransCo announced that its managing director, Harry Moulson, had retired with immediate effect for health reasons. Mr Moulson has played a key role in preparing the business for demerger from British Gas's trading arm. He was also involved in TransCo's decision to take its prices dispute with the industry regulator, Ofgas, to the MMC.

The climb-down on the Gas Levy claim prompted immediate speculation that British Gas was close to a breakthrough in negotiations with North Sea oil companies over its £40bn take-or-pay contracts. When British Gas issued its writ against the DTI for refund of Gas Levy the DTI immediately counter-suited, issuing "protective writs" against 27 oil and gas companies in case the claim went against it. In response the DTI yesterday also dropped its legal action.

Several of the oil companies named in the DTI writ had been preparing their own counter-claim against British Gas, arguing that liability in the contracts could be passed back. One of these firms, Lasmo, welcomed the news.

Although British Gas has consistently denied that its legal action was linked to the take-or-pay negotiations, it was widely interpreted as a manoeuvre to put pressure on the oil companies to reach a deal. There is mounting speculation that British Gas Energy, which will inherit the take-or-pay liabilities on demerger, is near to a deal on renegotiating up to a quarter of the contracts.

The deal is likely to involve British Gas auctioning off some of its interest in the Morecambe Bay gas field off the north-west coast. British Gas contracted to buy the gas from North Sea suppliers at prices of around 20p a therm compared with spot prices of under 10p earlier this year.

The take-or-pay problem has been considerably eased in recent months by a strengthening of spot prices to between 14p and 17p depending on the delivery date. The writ related to 24 old supply contracts between British Gas and North Sea oil companies covering eight gas fields on which it claimed it had overpaid Gas Levy, a tax of 4p a therm introduced in 1981.

Spelling out the reasons for shunning what Sir Christopher called the "seductive option", he made clear that Allied's current management, especially Tony Hales, chief executive, was under notice to improve the performance of the group or make way for others to do the job. Assessing the ability of Allied's executives was, he said yesterday, his biggest challenge.

He was speaking as Allied Domecq announced as 11 per cent fall in pre-exceptio-



Declining a seductive option: Tony Hales (left) and Sir Christopher Hogg disappointed the City.

City glum as Allied rules out demerger

Allied Domecq disappointed the City yesterday by ruling out a demerger of its Beefeater gin and Ballantine's whisky spirits arm from its pub and fast food retailing operations. Investors had hoped new chairman Sir Christopher Hogg would treat Allied to a re-run of his successful break-up of Courtaulds in 1990, writes Tom Stevenson.

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nally of the group or make way for others to do the job. Assessing the ability of Allied's executives was, he said yesterday, his biggest challenge.

He added that he had resisted the temptation to bow to considerable pressure from investing institutions that had started to view demerger as a panacea for Allied's problems because the cost would be unacceptable.

Investment column, page 19

erance. Despite expectations that it would be cut, the full-year dividend was maintained at 23.6p but the shares closed 14p lower at 454p as shareholders gave up hope of quickly realising Allied's estimated break-up value of about 550p.

Sir Christopher said Allied was "a fine group with good as-

AXA and UAP merger creates £5.3bn giant

Jill Treanor
Banking Correspondent

AXA and Union des Assurances de Paris, two French insurers, stunned European stock markets yesterday by announcing plans for a Fr45.1bn (£5.3bn) merger that would create the world's second-largest insurance company after Nippon Life of Japan.

In terms of assets under management, however, the combined group will be the world's largest insurer.

AXA has Fr1.53tn of assets under management while UAP has Fr743bn.

"It's an industry-shaking move with enormous ramifications for the European insurance industry," said Charles Landa, an insurance analyst at Société Générale Strauss Turnbull. "It's got to lead to further consolidation."

In the UK the merger will make the group the country's third-largest life insurer as AXA owns AXA Equity & Law and UAP owns 60 per cent of Sun Life. Under the terms of the deal AXA, Europe's third-largest insurer, is in effect taking over its larger rival UAP which was privatised in 1994.

Analysts predict numerous benefits for UAP, which lost money last year but returned to profit in the first half of 1996. UAP, a regular target for bid speculation after its losses last year and depressed share price, has seen its share rise 14.3 per cent since late last month.

Its shares were suspended

yesterday at Fr116.9 francs. "There have been plenty of rumours about UAP but they had all been discounted," said one analyst. Dealings in AXA's shares were also suspended yesterday with the price at Fr318.5 francs.

News of the merger sent shares in other UK insurance companies higher amid expectations that the deal would prompt further mergers among insurance companies. "There has been a general trend towards consolidation but this will quicken the process," one analyst said.

Shares in Legal & General ended 7.5 p higher at 332.5 p, while Prudential's shares rose 4p to 457p. Sun Life closed at 243.5, up 5.5p.

AXA and UAP said they would capitalise on their complementary businesses and geographical presence. The combined group will become the number one insurer in France and the insurers said they would rank among the leaders in the UK, Belgium, Germany and Spain. The deal will increase their presence in Italy and the Netherlands.

UAP shareholders will receive 10 UAP shares for four AXA shares plus four "certificates of guaranteed value".

If AXA's shares are below Fr392.50 in June 1999, the certificates entitle holders to receive the difference between that and the market price. The certificates can pay no more than Fr 80 per certificate, or Fr32 per UAP share.

Pubs chief could walk away with £850,000



Mark McQuater: Will not be replaced at Wetherspoon

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

The managing director of the fast-growing pub group JD Wetherspoon is set to walk away with more than £850,000 following his unexpected resignation yesterday "to pursue other interests".

Brought in only two and half years ago after a banking career at NatWest, Mark McQuater is still negotiating his severance package but it promises to be even bigger than the £640,000 pay-off secured earlier this week by Francis Baron, who pocketed two years pay after being ousted from First Choice, the holidays group.

Tim Martin, executive chair-

man of Wetherspoon and the driving force of the successful pub chain he founded, insisted yesterday there had been no falling out between the two. But Mr McQuater will not be replaced and doubts have been raised over Mr Martin's ability to delegate responsibility to the managing director again within the next 12 months.

Mr McQuater earned £144,400 according to Wetherspoon's latest report and accounts and was employed on a 12 month rolling contract which it is understood the company will pay out in full. He also holds 90,000 options over shares at an average exercise price of about 400p compared to yesterday's close of 1215p.

Exercising those options would net Mr McQuater £720,000, taking his total severance package to over £850,000.

The role of managing director will now be absorbed by the existing executive team. Mr Martin said the company would review the position of managing director again within the next year.

News of the bumper pay-offs from two relatively small companies is certain to irritate investors, although Mr McQuater's package has the merit of being largely a reflection of the dramatic appreciation of Wetherspoon's share price in recent years. Mr Baron's pay-off, which followed

Kingfisher pays £51m for Norweb Retail

Nigel Cope

Kingfisher yesterday moved to expand its Comet chain of electrical superstores when it agreed to pay £51m for Norweb Retail, part of United Utilities. But the deal immediately sparked controversy when union officials said the deal could involve up to 1,000 job losses.

Under the terms of the deal Kingfisher will close Norweb's 57 high street shops, its head office in Bolton and a distribution centre in Worsley. It is also expect-

ed that Kingfisher will close up to half of Norweb's 81 out-of-town superstores due to overlap with existing branches of Comet.

Stephanie Golden, national retail officer of Unison, criticised United Utilities for breaking the news to workers on the same day as organising a separate Budget cocktail party.

"This is a devastating announcement for our members and for Norweb's retail customers," she said. The decision to close the high street network would hit the elderly and the poor as well as those without their own transport.

PIA suffers further blow as broker quits

The Personal Investment Authority suffered a further blow over the pensions mis-selling scandal yesterday when Denis Brown, an insurance broker, resigned from the regulator's board, writes Jill Treanor.

He has resigned over concerns about the possible invalidation of professional indemnity insurance for independent financial advisers caught up in the scandal - an issue the PIA claimed to have ironed out months ago.

Mr Brown, in his resignation letter, said he was "deeply troubled" about the PIA's attitude towards forcing members to disclose privileged documents which may invalidate personal indemnity cover.

The PIA, however, said it had taken extensive legal advice on this issue which had concluded that its monitoring arrangements would not invalidate personal indemnity cover.

Separately, the PIA will today issue a progress report on the number of urgent pensions mis-selling cases that have been dealt with.

The report is expected to show only a slight improvement on figures leaked last month.

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COMMENT

'Members of converting building societies will be able to have their cake and eat it - take the windfall handout, keep or sell the shares, then shop around for the best savings rates elsewhere'

One up to the mutuals in the battle for savers

People who save with building societies outnumber mortgage borrowers by more than six to one. So it is small wonder the Nationwide has decided to stage a tactical retreat on the lending front, now that mortgage demand is picking up strongly, in order to concentrate its firepower on attracting savers.

The move is also in part designed to further Nationwide's increasingly lonely defence of the mutual structure of ownership. By raising mortgage rates, Nationwide can offer keener deposit rates. With luck the effect will be to lure back to the mutual tradition savers who are holding their money with rivals right now in order to qualify for free shares. That's the claimed strategy anyway.

The converting societies' reply to the argument that the lower profit margin permitted by mutuality will allow higher deposit rates is that their savers will have a different kind of stake. Even if the rates of interest they earn are a shade lower than the rates offered by mutuals, they will have shares that pay dividends and offer capital gains.

This misses the obvious point, however. Members of converting building societies will be able to have their cake and eat it - take the windfall handout, keep or sell the shares, then shop around for the best savings rates elsewhere. Lettargy will probably ensure this does not occur on a grand scale, but at the margin it certainly will. This newspaper and most others have been inundated

with aggrieved Alliance and Leicester depositors threatening to move their money elsewhere as soon as they get their free shares.

Even though yesterday brought the first sign of an easing in the mortgage war, it also emphasised the pressures that the converting societies are going to face. Part of the *raison d'être* for the remaining mutuals will be to cut profit margins in retail banking by giving away to their depositors and borrowers in the shape of more competitive interest rates what converting societies and banks need to pay out in dividends.

The fact that the interest rate cycle has now turned will make matters worse. Mortgage lenders traditionally increase their margins on home loans when the level of base rates is declining. They did so with a vengeance during the housing market slump.

But when base rates are rising, building society margins tend to narrow. This is the more so this time round since most building societies are doubly cautious about increasing mortgage rates while the housing market recovery remains so fragile.

All in all, it adds up to a difficult first year for the new pics. A booming housing market will help but whether any of them manage to retain their present market share on either lending or deposits remains open to doubt. For all the Gadarene rush to convert into banks, there is a lesson in the fact that the banks have been losing market share to building societies pretty steadily for years. Mutually owned building societies may have

their drawbacks but they still win hands down over banks in terms of customer satisfaction.

Tokyo has nothing to fear from Big Bang

Miroshi Mitsuzuka, Japan's new finance minister, has chosen to announce the Japanese version of Big Bang, deregulation of financial markets, with this extraordinary incantation: "Now I am designated as commander on the front lines, with arrows and bullets falling around me like rain. If a bullet hits me, I could be injured, or even die. But I accept that". Eat your heart out Eric Cantona!

What Mr Mitsuzuka appears to have been saying, loosely translated, is that the proposals are likely to run into sustained opposition from powerful vested interests. As a result the plans are at this stage notably thin on detail and suitably long term (2001). In truth, however, political opponents would be well advised to forget their reservations and back the reforms wholeheartedly, for unless Tokyo changes soon and fast, it will slip so far behind New York and London that it will never catch up.

Tokyo is still one of the top three financial centres in the world, but only by virtue of the size of the domestic economy behind it and the vast capital flows that need to be recycled. Otherwise Tokyo as a financial centre is pretty much still living in the stone age.

As a self standing, internationally competitive organism, it is now so far behind London that the two barely stand comparison.

Deregulated commissions reign supreme in securities trading and strictly enforced barriers still exist between securities operations and banks. There are even still some controls on foreign exchange transactions. Like so much else in Japan, Tokyo as a financial centre is a largely protected market place. The big US proprietary trading operations, like parasites on the pig's belly, thrive there, but they remain essentially barred from the inner sanctum.

The lesson of the City is that Tokyo has nothing to fear from deregulation and everything to gain. Weaker institutions will go to the wall, but stronger ones will prosper and grow larger still. Nomura will undoubtedly emerge even more omnipotent than it is already. The foreigners will invade in their hordes, but bring capital and expertise with them. Ultimately Tokyo will be the better. All this assumes Mr Mitsuzuka is serious, that this is more than hot air to appease foreign critics. But when the seagulls follow the trawler, it is because they think sushi might be thrown into the sea, as Cantona might have said.

British Gas gets it wrong again

Another day, another farce in the affairs of that much loved company, British Gas. This time British Gas has been forced

into an embarrassing climbdown on the legal action it launched against the Government last summer to recover £1.2bn in North Sea gas levies. We don't have a case after all, BG admitted yesterday. Which rather begs the question of why it came to launch such a no-hoper in the first place.

There are three possible answers. The company's own explanation is that it was forced to launch the action last summer because if it didn't it would fall victim to a time bomb and any hope of recovering the money would have vanished for ever. In other words it was merely a question of keeping options open.

For the more conspiratorially minded there is the theory that the action was launched as a way of putting pressure on the Government to help British Gas settle its costly dispute with North Sea producers over take or pay contracts. The evidence for this is that British Gas's action against the Government prompted counter-claims by the Government against the North Sea producers, some of whom squared the circle by taking action against BG. Wonderful for the lawyers, but ludicrous too. Actually there is some movement on this front, with a number of the North Sea producers likely to settle with BG over the coming months.

The best explanation, however, is the least complicated one. It is that this is simply another of those misguided initiatives by BG and that again it has backfired.

Tobacco firms get writs

Magnus Grindom

Imperial Tobacco and Gallaher, two of Britain's biggest cigarette companies, could face legal claims of up to £1.2m after writs were served yesterday in a landmark case alleging their products contributed to lung cancer.

Twelve cancer sufferers who started smoking between 1936 and 1955 are claiming that the companies' negligence in continuing to sell tobacco products after it became clear in the 1950s that high levels of tar contributed to the disease.

The tobacco industry is expected to put up fierce resistance to the claims, which could open the doors to a flood of further actions if successful. Imperial said yesterday it had strong defences which it would pursue vigorously.

The case is making legal history as the first group action by British smokers and the first to be undertaken on a "no-win, no-fee" basis. Martyn Day, the solicitor who is acting for the plaintiffs, said yesterday's move was very significant. "We have been fighting for four years to get to this stage and it is a great relief that we have got there. The phoney war is over and the real battle has begun."

Mr Day said about 60 cancer sufferers had signed up on a conditional fee basis. He estimated that the final number could eventually total between 100 and 200, which at an average claim of between £50,000 and £60,000 could mean an eventual total of as much as £1.2m. Further claims will be made over the next few months, he said. A full trial is not expected before October 1998.



Dire warnings: John Redwood told the conference in Harrogate the switch to the euro would cost UK firms billions of pounds

Redwood's single currency warnings leave CBI unmoved

Chris Godsmark

Dire warnings of an impending economic nightmare if the UK joined a single European currency received little obvious support from CBI delegates in Harrogate yesterday in a clear sign of confidence in monetary union.

The CBI's high-profile debate on EMU saw John Redwood and Sir John Hoskyns, chairman of the Burton group and a former adviser to Lady Thatcher, putting the Eurosceptic case across the table from two leading advocates of EMU. Sir David Simon, chairman of BP and Peter Sutherland, chairman of investment bankers Goldman Sachs International and former head of the Gatt world trade organisation.

Mr Redwood claimed the switch to the euro would cost UK firms billions of pounds with only marginal benefits in terms of reduced transaction costs. Arguing that the underlying

agenda of Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, was political, he said: "He wants to build a country called Europe, governed from a City called Brussels with its economy directed from a bank in Frankfurt."

If Britain stepped up its opposition to EMU, Mr Redwood suggested the Government could still have a slim chance of stopping the single currency altogether.

The biggest applause, however, came after Sir David's rousing pro-European speech, literally sprinkled with cracking metaphors and a savage attack on Britain's long history of currency devaluations. Sir David said fixing the pound to the euro would act as a spur to business competitiveness, no longer shielded by a depreciating pound.

"If devaluation was the key to successful economic management we should be the wealthiest country in Europe, bar none," he argued.

The blackest warnings of economic doom came from Sir John Hoskyns, who claimed EMU was "a complete dud" and "the biggest defensive merger of all time". Changing the curren-

cy would cost retailers across the EU £2bn, Sir John estimated. He said EMU was the result of "self deception, sloppy thinking and creative accounting".

Just one delegate spoke from the floor in favour of the Redwood and Hoskyns side, with seven speeches backing Sir David and Mr Sutherland.

Showing 56 per cent of firms supporting the principle of EMU. Despite this, as the conference closed, CBI leaders continued to back the "wait and see" approach adopted by the

Government and Labour. "The reason we didn't put the issue to a vote on the conference floor is that the pro-EMU side would have won so decisively," admitted a CBI source.

Barclays chief and Bank Governor clash over rate rise

Michael Harrison

Andrew Buxton, the chairman of Barclays Bank, yesterday clashed with the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, over last week's quarter point rise in interest rates.

The clash came as Mr

George delivered a strong defence of the Bank's inflation strategy and fired a warning shot across the Chancellor's bows about the scope for budget tax cuts.

Mr George told the CBI conference in Harrogate that the rise in base rates had been

necessary to curb a "textbook domestically-driven economic upswing" and repeated the Bank's view that some further rate rises may well be necessary in due course to keep a lid on inflation.

But Mr Buxton said the interest rate rise had not been

necessary although he recognised the Governor's concerns about inflation and the need to act early. He went on to urge the Chancellor to bear in mind that further interest rate rises would further strengthen the pound, depressing exports and manufacturing performance.

"We should therefore not rush to interest rate rises without thinking of our exporters."

Mr George said that keeping a tight grip on inflation was not enough to improve economic performance alone.

"It needs to be accompanied by prudent and sustainable

fiscal policy," he added.

On economic and monetary union, he said Britain did not need to be apprehensive about the euro, whether or not it joined in the first phase of a single currency. But it did need to be prepared.

Mr George also took to

task those member states tempted to fudge their performance on debt and public deficit in the "haste dash for the line" to qualify for a single currency, and their temptation "to take artificial stimulants in order to get there".

East Midlands locked in talks with Dominion

They followed Dominion's announcement last week that it was considering a bid at a price not much in excess of 60p a share, giving East Midlands a minimum valuation of £1.2bn.

Nottingham-based East Midlands scoffed at the price, saying it undervalued the Nottingham-based electricity company's prospects. Speculation that Dominion might be prepared to come up with an increased offer pushed shares in East Midlands higher yesterday. They closed at 61p, up 7.5p on the day, after touching 61.85p in earlier exchanges.

Pain will measure the success of Japan's move to open market

Richard Lloyd Parry

Japan's so-called "Big Bang", an ambitious programme of financial deregulation unexpectedly announced by the government on Monday night, was welcomed by business leaders yesterday, but faces formidable obstacles if it is to come into effect by its deadline of 2001.

Shunroku Hashimoto, chairman of the Federation of Bankers' Associations of Japan, yesterday praised the government for its "plans to re-invigorate the financial market as a venue that can match New York and London". Opinion in Tokyo, however, was divided over whether political instability will consign the latest reform initiative to the sizeable scrap heap of disappointed promises.

Prominent among the pro-

posals are plans to increase competition by allowing banks, brokerage houses and insurance companies the right to participate in one another's markets. Government regulation of insurance premiums and stockbroking commissions will also be reduced, and greater access

will be granted to Japan's vast, and hitherto closely regulated, pension market. Distinctions between commercial banks, long-term credit banks and trust banks will also be removed, enabling commercial banks to issue debentures and provide trust services which at present are virtually unavailable to ordinary Japanese investors.

The outline for the plan speaks of legal reforms, and changes in the tax and ac-

counting regulations which would increase financial transparency and bring them closer to international standards. For instance, loopholes which make it difficult to calculate the precise assets of big corporations will be eliminated. The first step, an abolition of the rule which restricts foreign exchange transactions to authorised commercial banks, is set to be submitted to parliament in the new year.

The timetable for the rest of the programme is vague, and virtually all of the proposals have been fruitlessly floated before by various government panels and deregulatory bodies.

The high-profile nature of the announcement, endorsed by the Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, less than a week after his formal re-election, will make it harder for politicians and bureaucrats to wriggle out of implementing them.

The biggest obstacle may be political. Mr Hashimoto's government is 12 seats short of a full majority and vested interests will ensure each new bill has a rough passage. Particular re-

sistance can be expected from the many Japanese MPs who began their careers in the bureaucracy, and from big businesses which benefit from the current closed markets.

"No matter how indispensable it may be for the Japanese economy in the 21st Century," concedes the draft plan, "such a thorough structural reform necessarily brings various pains."

Japan's independence? Yasukazu Torii, president of Tokyo's Keio University and chairman of the study group said yesterday: "If these ideas materialise, we will have a central bank on a par with those of other advanced countries." In proposals which could become law as early as next January, a government-sponsored panel urged the Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, to abolish the rules that allow him to sack bank officials at will and to sack them at will in order to veto policy decisions. While stopping far short of a Bundesbank-style arrangement, they would allow the BOJ's governor more leeway in formulating monetary policy.

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market report / shares

Data Bank	
FTSE 100	3934.3 + 19.9
FTSE 250	4404.8 + 9.0
FTSE 350	1963.5 + 8.6
SEAO VOLUME	659.3m shares,
Gilt's Index	35,454 bargains
	93.84 + 0.11
Share spotlight	
Capital Radio	100 - 1.00 J.F.M. MASON

Berisford parts from broker after profits warning

Berisford International, which stunned the stock market with a profit warning, has suddenly parted company with its long-time stockbroker, ABN Amro Hoare Govett. Although Hoare played down the split there is little doubt it resigned because it felt uncomfortable with Berisford's trading performance and its shares slumped, the price is at a year's low of 103p against 268p last year.

In September, at around the time of the profit warning, Hoare's chairman, Peter Meierthagen, admitted the securities house had experienced a difficult third quarter but said market-making losses were "a lot less" than a rumoured £20m. The shares which were thought to have caused Hoare so much trouble were Berisford, Hanson, Iceland and the suspended Wickes.

Since Alan Bowkett started to transform Berisford, a former commodities group, it has

risen, through Hoare, £58.7m to take over the Magnet Kitchen operation and then, with a loan stock, £334m, largely to fund the takeover of Welbilt, a US maker of commercial kitchen equipment.

An industrial dispute at Magnet and a downturn in the US were blamed for the profit warning when expectations for the year ended September were cut to £25m from £33m. Barclays de Zoete Wedd has taken over as Berisford's broker.

The rest of the market made hesitant progress with Footsie up 19.9 points to 3,934.3 with the latest interest rate comments of Bank of England Governor Eddie George creating more caution.

The Retail Consortium's October survey helped retailers although much of Dixons' 18.5p gain to 56p was due to a story of a Kingfisher bid. The confusion could have been

caused by Kingfisher's £51m autumn swoop on United Utilities retail arm.

Barton was actively traded with talk of an institutional seller, possibly UBS. There were also rumours of a bid for House of Fraser. It was enough to lower the shares 3.25p to 144.5p.

The proposed French insurance merger between AXA and UAP life insurance shares with Sun Life & Provincial, controlled by UAP, up 5.5p to 244.5p.

Allied Domex's poor figures left the shares down 14p to 454p. Since chairman Sir Christopher Hogg let it be known over the weekend that

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

he had rejected thoughts of a demerger the shares have lost 30.5p.

Guinness frothed up 8.5p to 445.5p as stories resurfaced that LVMH was moving towards placing all or part of its 21 per cent interest. It was suggested a number of securities houses had talked to the French group but had been unable to agree a price. With its thirst to expand the French group is thought to be keen to raise cash and it is coming round to the view that Guinness represents its cash cow.

Eurodisc Electron fell a further 15.5p to 138.5p following a warning of lower interim profits but Wardle Stores, a maker of survival equipment, jumped 42p to 503.5p on a 47.3 per cent profit advance and bullish statement.

Vodafone fell 3.5p to 239.5p despite confident noises from Merrill Lynch suggesting a 280p target price. A buyer of call options lifted BT 2p to 35.5p.

EAT Industries, up 6p at 426p, and Imperial Group, 5.5p to 364p, drew encouragement from a leading US investment fund's decision not to sell its tobacco shareholdings.

Imperial Chemical Industries rose 12p to 779.5p on Crédit Lyonnais' Laing support but an investment presentation did little for P&O, off 1.5p to 598p. East Midlands Electricity ended 7.5p higher at 611p as talks started with potential US bidder, Dominion Resources.

Pearson rose 12.5p to 729p in belated response to the new Henderson Crosthwaite break-

TAKING STOCK

□ Ofex continues to attract newcomers. Latest are Northstar Securities, a property group, and Recall, a car audio firm that has developed a vehicle security system. Northstar is raising £2.3m, selling units of five shares and one warrant at 125p. It is buying the 3M pension fund's property portfolio for £10.5m. Recall is raising £900,000, selling shares at 15p. Its audio business is profitable; the cash will be used to develop the security system which immobilises a vehicle.

□ Sunderland could be the next Premiership football club to seek a stock market presence. It is thought to have appointed NM Rothschild and Charterhouse Tilney to advise on a flotation. Bob Murray, the club's chief executive, is thought to be keen to bring the club to market.

Share Price Data									
Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, divided by the price of the share. The price-to-earnings ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: Ex Rights x Ex-dividend date Ex All I United Securities Market x Suspended x All Stock									
The index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from Seq. Simply dial 0898 223 223, followed by the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0898 1233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.									
FTSE 100 Real-time index of 30 leading companies									
UK Company News									
Foreign Exchange									
Anytime with a tone-dial telephone can use the service. For a detailed description of The Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 0898 123 333. For assistance, call 071 872 4375 (930am - 530pm)									
Calls cost 50p per minute (daytime), 45p per minute of all other times. Call charges include									
Market leaders: Top 20 volumes									
Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value
BT	£100m	BP	£400m	Lloyds TSB	£500m	Codicor	£200m		
Orange	£400m	BTG	£200m	SITC Inds	£500m	British Grid	£400m		
Hanson	£500m	Imperial Tobacco	£400m	Smit & Neph	£400m	British Gas	£400m		
Motorola	£500m	Allied Domex	£200m	British Airways	£200m	Legal & General	£400m		
Burns	£500m	Reed & Cohen	£200m	Lodestar	£200m	Pearson	£200m		
FTSE 100 Index hour by hour									
Open 39218 up 74	11.00 39210 up 165	14.00 39210 up 159							
Open 39216 up 72	12.00 39219 up 125	16.00 39213 up 153							
10.00 39220 up 95	13.00 39270 up 25	14.00 39213 up 168							
		12.00 39227 up 153							
		16.00 39213 up 168							
		Close 39213 up 139							
Oil Exploration									
Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value
Petrol	£100m	Propylene	£100m	Academy	£100m	Statoil	£100m	Prudential	£100m
BP	£100m	BP	£400m	Lloyds TSB	£500m	Codicor	£200m		
Amoco	£400m	BTG	£200m	SITC Inds	£500m	British Grid	£400m		
Shell	£500m	Imperial Tobacco	£400m	Smit & Neph	£400m	British Gas	£400m		
		Allied Domex	£200m	British Airways	£200m	Legal & General	£400m		
		Reed & Cohen	£200m	Lodestar	£200m	Pearson	£200m		
Oil, Integrated									
Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value
Petrol	£100m	Propylene	£100m	Academy	£100m	Statoil	£100m	Prudential	£100m
BP	£100m	BP	£400m	Lloyds TSB	£500m	Codicor	£200m		
Amoco	£400m	BTG	£200m	SITC Inds	£500m	British Grid	£400m		
Shell	£500m	Imperial Tobacco	£400m	Smit & Neph	£400m	British Gas	£400m		
		Allied Domex	£200m	British Airways	£200m	Legal & General	£400m		
		Reed & Cohen	£200m	Lodestar	£200m	Pearson	£200m		
Other Financial									
Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value
Barclays	£100m	Barclays	£100m	Barclays	£100m	Barclays	£100m	Barclays	£100m
Chase	£100m	Chase	£100m	Chase	£100m	Chase	£100m	Chase	£100m
HSBC	£100m	HSBC	£100m	HSBC	£100m	HSBC	£100m	HSBC	£100m
ICI	£100m	ICI	£100m	ICI	£100m	ICI	£100m	ICI	£100m
Lehman Brothers	£100m	Lehman Brothers	£100m	Lehman Brothers	£100m	Lehman Brothers	£100m	Lehman Brothers	£100m
NatWest	£100m	NatWest	£100m	NatWest	£100m	NatWest	£100m	NatWest	£100m
Prudential	£100m	Prudential	£100m	Prudential	£100m	Prudential	£100m	Prudential	£100m
Standard Chartered	£100m	Standard Chartered	£100m	Standard Chartered	£100m	Standard Chartered	£100m	Standard Chartered	£100m
Unilever	£100m	Unilever	£100m	Unilever	£100m	Unilever	£100m	Unilever	£100m
Retailers, Food									
Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value	Stock	Value
Aldi	£100m	Aldi	£100m	Aldi	£100m	Aldi	£100m	Aldi	£100m
Asda	£100m	Asda	£100m	Asda	£100m	Asda	£100m	Asda	£100m
Waitrose	£100m	Waitrose	£100m	Waitrose	£100m	Waitrose	£100m	Waitrose	£100m
Supermarkets	£100m	Supermarkets	£100m	Supermarkets	£100m	Supermarkets	£100m	Supermarkets	£100m
Food Manufacturers	£100m	Food Manufacturers	£100m						

sport

Snelling sees gold in the Lottery pool

Guy Hodgson
meets a dreamer
who believes in
British swimming

How about this for a pronouncement. "I see no reason why we shouldn't be the No 1 nation at the Olympic Games in four years." Who said it? Someone one length short of a race distance or a wild optimist with little grip on reality? We are talking swimming, after all, a sport in which Britain won just one medal at the Barcelona Games and two in Atlanta. That was the men: the women do cartwheels if they get anyone through to a final.

The author of what appears to be an absurd statement is Deryk Snelling, British swimming's newly-appointed National Performance Director. He says it because he believes it, even if the positive comes with a litany of provisos.

"If we can get the resources that will be available from the Lottery," Snelling said, beginning his list. "It's done correctly, if it's focused where it needs to be and if we, the coaches, do our jobs to the best of our ability, there is no reason why British swimmers should not be going to the podium time after time."

"Certainly, we could give America a hard time as the Australians have in the past. The US are not unbeatable in this game but we are up against a 1,000-fold difference in terms of support. Not 10 per cent but one-thousand times. There's not a university in the US that isn't better funded in terms of swimming than our entire nation."

Pipe dreams, then. We could get there if we spend the money. But Britain is a nation where Paul Palmer's coach, Ian Turner, had to take unpaid leave from his teaching job for eight months to prepare for his silver swim in Atlanta. It is the country where our top athletes have to train at 5am. It is also the place which has fewer indoor 50m pools than the Canadian city of Winnipeg.

Yet the grounds for Snelling's optimism are embodied in himself. Twenty nine years ago, the 63-year-old from Darwen,



Dreaming by the pool: 'I see no reason why we shouldn't be the No 1 nation at the Olympic Games in four years,' says Deryk Snelling

Photograph: Simon Wilkinson

Lancashire, left Britain because he felt swimming in this country was going nowhere. Canada was a land of opportunity and he grabbed it, helping his adopted home achieve 19 Olympic medals, six world records and 23 short course best times. The fact he has returned is a happy omen in itself.

"I went to achieve a dream," he said, "and Canada which was investing across the board in sport provided it. I can see the same thing over here now. GB has a tremendous future because it has so far to go to catch up but most of the things we need to do will be available to us thanks to money from the National Lottery. It's the right time."

Snelling was talking in Leeds,

which he was visiting as part of a programme of meetings with the country's leading coaches.

He was due to see Terry Denison, Adrian Moorhouse's former mentor, that day; the night before he had visited Dave Calleja, who guided Graham Smith to bronze in Atlanta, in Stockport. It is part of the learning process, swapping ideas.

"Even at European junior level we are really strong," Snelling said. "We've just been missing the mark a little bit at the last few Olympics. We've consistently won medals but a nation of this many talented swimmers and coaches ought to have performed better. My role is to fill those gaps. Someone thinking at a world level who

is not distracted with other responsibilities."

Snelling's ambition is an academy where the top swimmers train with the best at the peak of the pyramid. That will be sup-

Olympic Games handicapped by lack of finance and with only scant experience of battling against the best.

"If we took 10 swimmers altitude training once, not three

despite the system. There isn't a swimming club in this country that doesn't have a world-class athlete but the problem is there isn't the mechanism to let these people mature and progress through the system.

It's all so hit-and-miss. If an athlete isn't born in the right part of the country or a coach doesn't happen to be in the pool at the right time, it never happens. We have to solve these problems."

The countdown to Sydney 2000 begins next month with the European Short Course Championships in Rostock, Germany. After that, there are the European Championships in Sevilla next August and in 14 months time a milestone which should give Snelling an idea

whether his work is bearing fruit, the World Championships in Perth, Australia.

"We have a great nucleus now. Our two medallists in Atlanta are young but even the people who didn't show at those Olympics are incredible. Given

the right preparation and the right support, they'll make it to the podium. These are great athletes, they make you feel excited. I feel prickly all over just thinking about what they could achieve."

Let us hope Snelling is right: the financial support is coming and the Lottery will provide a panacea to chronic under-funding. Then we might all get prickly all over come the next Olympics.

Headley earns praise and rest
Cricket

Dean Headley earned reluctant praise yesterday for his outstanding contribution to England A's tour from South Australia's Joe Scuderi. The Kent fast bowler claimed a career-best 11 for 98 - the fifth time in as many first-class matches for England A he has captured five wickets or more in an innings - to help the tourists snatch a sensational 12-run victory over the Sheffield Shield holders in Adelaide on Monday.

South Australia, a normally disciplined and highly competitive outfit, were reduced to openly disputing two of Headley's wickets and Jamie Siddons, their captain, and Scuderi were spoken to for dissent by the umpires.

Scuderi, who has played for the Lancashire league club Colne for the past six seasons, put aside his disappointment at England's victory to salute Headley's performance.

"He's a really good bowler," Scuderi admitted. "He's got a bit of zip about him and he bowls just short of length, which doesn't give you much to go on."

England made the short flight across South Australia to Mount Gambier yesterday to begin preparations for their four-day match against the much-heralded Academy side, when Headley is expected to be rested.

Jimmy Adams and Courtney Browne spared the West Indies' blushes yesterday in their limited-overs match against a Northern Territory Invitational XI at Alice Springs. Coming together at 66 for 5, the sixth-wicket pair added 98 to lift their side to 218 for 8 in their 50 overs. The Invitational XI, containing seven Sheffield Shield players, were dismissed for 170 in 42.5 overs.

YESTERDAY'S MATCHES: Alice Springs: West Indies 218 for 8 in 50 overs; J C Adams 67, C O'Brien 50, N T Invitational XI 170, 42.5 overs; A C Gohar 64 not. West Indies won by 48 runs.

INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

LATEST RESULTS AND TOP 50 TEAMS

TOP Fifty LEAGUE TABLE

CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 AUGUST - 3 NOVEMBER

POS.	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1.	John Cox	Southill FC	397
2.	S A Scott	Foreign Back Boys	390
3.	Chris Scott	Bruce Lee FC	389
4.	Paul Glazzard	Chocolate Tea Pots	382
5.	Aaron Jones	Catiron 2	379
6.	Carl Britton	Maple Mousse E	378
7.	Steven Lawrence	Tessa's Little Marvels	377
8.	Stephen Hart	Kee Cowboys	377
9.	Adam Hogg	Blaggy Hogs	377
10.	S King	Cruising Alexandria	377
11.	Andrew Burnman	Wimbledon Stupid Heads	377
12.	Ian Boyle	12	376
13.	J M Sals	Jotty City	376
14.	Paul Massey	Cherrywood 1	374
15.	Keith Horry	Organic Manure FC	374
16.	D J Robinson	Tank For England	374
17.	S Walls	The Untouchables	373
18.	G Lake	Basket Of Eggs	373
19.	Jonathan McCrossan	Washtops Army	373
20.	Robert Northcroft	I Know Your Wife	373
21.	Peter Shelske	Lincoln St Giles	372
22.	M Crossland	Otsey C Lyons	372
23.	C M Down	The Deals Reserves	372
24.	Peter Franklin	Arlington	372
25.	David Robinson	Double B	372
26.	Mr Stroud	Kristov Baerwald	372
27.	Mr Andrew Clark	Tom and Phillip	371
28.	David Edmonson	Clark United	371
29.	Steve Payne	Edmo United	371
30.	Husam Sathy	Mondialised Tuesday	371
31.	Michael Devere	I'm Off To France United	370
32.	Mr D Cannon	That's Handy Harry	370
33.	Steve Barnes	Knows de FC	370
34.	Dr Tom Boyle	Bazzy's Defence	369
35.	I Lippitz	Last Gasp Gullits	369
36.	David Baker	Clean Street	369
37.	G Jones	Baker Boys	369
38.	Keith Watson	Abbey Last United	369
39.	Mr S Wallig	Elementary Opportunists	369
40.	Robert Pringle	Independent Moles	369
41.	Peter Franklin	Deepdale Villa 7	369
42.	A Vickers	Jose Marti	369
43.	Sam Parkin	Football Magic	369
44.	Barry Lee	Hannozza Racing FC	369
45.	Steve Payne	Lee Manor	368
46.	Jake Gibbons	No Future in Fury	368
47.	John Chalmer	Champagne Sleepingover	367
48.	Frances Henderson	Easton	367
49.	Steve Barnes	Secondary Celtic	367
50.	Steve Barnes	Steve's Superstars	367

THE INDEPENDENT

Today we publish the latest results in our Independent Fantasy Football game, supported by Philips Energy Saver Light Bulbs.

Results will be published every Wednesday in The Independent for all games played from the previous Monday to Sunday inclusive. They will also appear the following Sunday, in the Independent on Sunday. The overall Top 50 League table will be printed every Wednesday and again

times a year like the Australians do with squads of 40, it would probably break our association. Which is absolutely ludicrous. We don't have the resources and Britain have been handicapped. They've won

on Sunday. Terms and conditions are as previously published and are available upon request.

PRIZES

The overall winner at the end of the season will be the entrant who has accrued more points than any other Independent Fantasy Football team in that time. Win the ultimate prize - a trip to the 1998 World Cup in France. The winner, plus companion, will see all the action of a quarter-final and a semi-final of their choice, plus the final. In addition, the highest scoring team each month will win a pair of tickets to one of England's World Cup qualifying games at Wembley.

4 points for a goal ■ 4 points for a goalkeeper/defender clean sheet ■ 3 points for a successful assist ■ 1 point when a player is selected and plays ■ 1 point for a winning goal ■ 3 points for a manager win ■ 1 point for a draw ■ Loss 1 point for a yellow card ■ Loss 3 points for a red card

SCORING SYSTEM

* Before transfer period ■ A - After transfer period

CODE PLAYER TEAM POINTS Wk13 B A Ov (Ov)

GOALKEEPERS

CODE PLAYER TEAM POINTS Wk13 B A Ov (Ov)

DEFENDERS

CODE PLAYER TEAM POINTS Wk13 B A Ov (Ov)

MIDFIELD

CODE PLAYER TEAM POINTS Wk13 B A Ov (Ov)

STRIKERS

CODE PLAYER TEAM POINTS Wk13 B A Ov (Ov)

MANAGERS

CODE PLAYER TEAM POINTS Wk13 B A Ov (Ov)

PHILIPS ENERGY SAVER LIGHT BULBS

Pledge to end fixture congestion

Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWITT

One of the most influential figures in European rugby yesterday announced a new bridge-building exercise between major northern hemisphere clubs and their respective governing bodies aimed at halting the game's downward slide into black comedy. Roger Pickering, the chief executive of the Five Nations Committee, said he expected a cross-border fixtures schedule to be agreed at a meeting later this month.

Pickering, who is also tournament director of the Heineken European Cup, was speaking as officials from Cardiff and Bath voiced their concerns over the fixture congestion that has already seen four important league games cancelled in England because of Test call-ups from Ireland and Scotland – a situation that is almost certain to be repeated three times in the next 10 weeks. John Hall, the Bath team manager, feared "massive disruption" at club level as the international season gets into full stride.

While Pickering accepted that the die had been cast for this season, he insisted that a new pan-European fixture structure would be in place in time for the start of the 1997-98 campaign.

"It's at the top of the agenda and representatives of the Five Nations Committee will meet with club officials from all five leading countries before the end of November to thrash this out," he said. "The fixtures for this season have already been agreed and it will be very difficult to change things at this stage, but by agreeing a structure for next season we can make it virtually impossible for these problems to arise again."

Importantly, Pickering acknowledged the primacy of European rugby over domestic fixtures, although he indicated that national competitions would

continue to provide the backbone of activity in each country. Although a number of leading clubs want cross-border tournaments on a home and away basis next season, they are unlikely to get their way if the price is a diluted league programme.

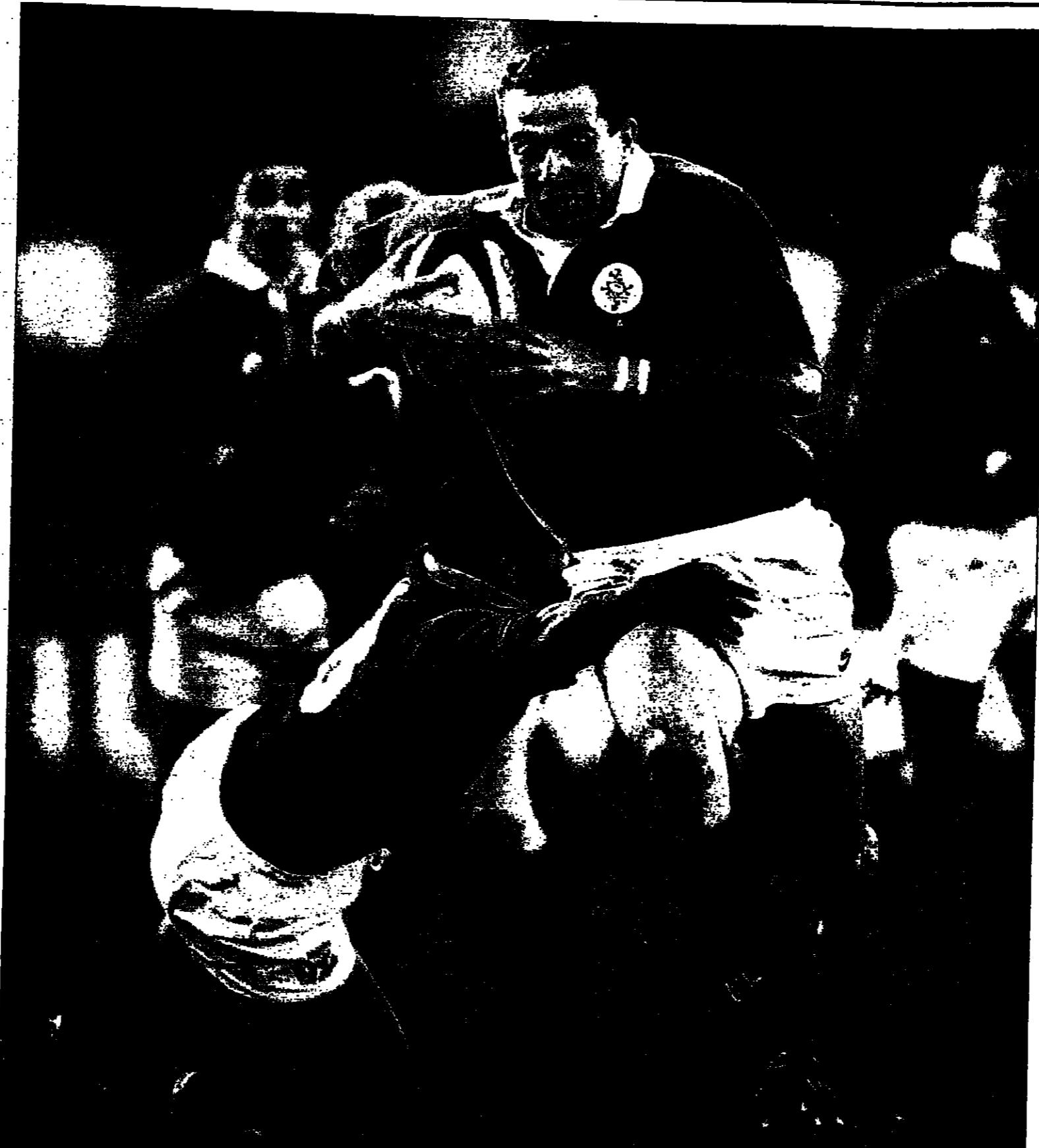
Cardiff, who face Bath in a sell-out Heineken Cup quarter-final at the Arms Park on Saturday, are the latest club to be confronted with fixture difficulties; they play Sale in the Anglo-Welsh tournament tonight but will be forced to field a second-string side. "I think the rugby league clubs learned the lesson some time ago that one game a week is enough for anyone," the Cardiff coach, Terry Holmes, said. "It's unfortunate, but none of our first choice players will face Sale for obvious reasons."

Holmes could hardly be blamed for playing safe as he already has a number of injury concerns in advance of the Bath showdown, with their outside-half, Jonathan Davies, and the loose forward Emrys Lewis facing late fitness tests on rib and finger injuries respectively.

Bath are even more vulnerable on the casualty front; they have lost the experienced forwards Graham Dawe and Richard Webster to knocks suffered during last Saturday's defeat at Northampton and will almost certainly be denied the services of the former England lock, Nigel Redman. He is still struggling with a groin condition sustained during the victory over Bath three weeks ago.

■ Italy have named a 21-man squad at their friendly against England at Twickenham on Saturday week. The back-rower Cesario Covi is recalled after a five-year absence while the captain, Massimo Cuttitta, has recovered from a thigh injury that forced him to miss last month's international against Australia.

IRANIA SQUAD (v England, Twickenham, Sat, 22 November): A Castrovilli, W Costanzo, G Di Stefano, G Fazio, G Giannini, D Gori, A Gravina, O Arcoria, M Guttuso, D Dominguez, C Orsi, F Pappalardi, S Soriano, M Ravezzolo, P Vacca, A Bassani, L Cozzi, G Guidi, P Pellegrini, M Bazzani.



Ireland's winger Conor O'Shea breaks through the attempted tackle of South Africa's Gerald Scholtz during the A international at Donnybrook in Dublin yesterday. O'Shea scored a try in each half to help his side to a hard-fought 28-25 victory

Photograph: Mark Thompson/Allsport

Hall puts Cardiff game top of the bill

John Hall, Bath's director of rugby, yesterday described the European Cup quarter-final with Cardiff as "the biggest match in our history".

A sell-out 12,000 crowd will pack the Arms Park on Saturday despite live coverage on BBC Wales, confirming its billing as the biggest Anglo-Welsh club match ever. Between them, the sides boast 23 major domestic titles since 1981, while more than 20 full internationals could be involved in a clash that has Wales versus England written all over it.

Speaking in Cardiff, Hall said Bath intended putting patchy Courage League form behind them and keeping alive their European dream.

"We've already lost in this tournament at Pontypool, and I expect Cardiff to be a better side than they were," he claimed. "By our standards, you could say that we have had a terrible start to the season. We are still playing some magnificent rugby, it's just that things are a little bit tougher now."

Bath's horizons do not end with Europe. The English champions are planning a two-match tour of South Africa next summer. They hope to play Natal in Durban and Western Province at Newlands, Cape Town.

Cardiff, who have also produced some erratic league performances this season, expect their injured international trio, Jonathan Davies, Derwyn Jones and Emrys Lewis, to return for Saturday.

Terry Holmes, the Cardiff coach, said: "Bath have been the most consistent English side for years. It will be a huge challenge for us, but if you want success at this level of competition then you have got to meet, and beat, the best. Let's hope the game lives up to its billing."

In Saturday's other quarter-finals, English rivals Leicester and Harlequins come face to face at Welford Road, while French giants Dax and Toulouse meet head on. Llanelli visit tournament favourites Brive on Sunday. The semi-finals are scheduled for 4-5 January with the final on 25 January.

American football

NFL: San Diego 22 Detroit 21.

Badminton

Jule Bradbury, England's No 1 doubles player, has withdrawn from domestic and international competition until after the birth of her baby next summer on medical grounds. She will miss England's second-round series against China, which begins in December.

Basketball

London Towers, of the British Women's League, must suffer their first home games in this season's European Cup qualifying group stages. Their Georgia tonight at Wembley and against Podgorica in Montenegro in three weeks to come are off the programme. And that would probably mean another knock-

out with Saratov Moscow in the last 32. London's remaining away games are against Ankara in Turkey and Komend in Hungary.

NBA: Denver 104 Toronto 93; Chicago 97 Phoenix 78; Seattle 110 Sacramento 94; Portland 102 Atlanta 91; Dallas 103 Boston 89.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	5	1	.833	68
Miami	4	1	.800	67
Orlando	2	1	.667	17
Washington	3	2	.600	16
Philadelphia	3	3	.500	15
Boston	1	4	.200	21
New Jersey	0	3	.000	20
Atlanta	0	3	.000	20

Central Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	7	0	.100	68
Detroit	4	1	.800	67
Milwaukee	4	1	.800	67
Cleveland	4	1	.800	67
Charlotte	3	2	.500	66
Atlanta	3	2	.500	66

Western Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	4	1	.833	68
Seattle	4	1	.833	68
Oklahoma City	3	2	.500	67
Portland	3	2	.500	67
Vancouver	0	3	.000	66

Pacific Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	5	1	.833	68
Oakland	4	1	.800	67
San Antonio	1	4	.200	21
Phoenix	0	3	.000	20
Vancouver	0	3	.000	20

Toronto 2 W 3 L 20 Pct .400; Indiana 1 L 3 W 20 Pct .250; 4.

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	6	0	.100	68
Utah	2	1	.667	17
Denver	3	2	.500	16
Minnesota	3	2	.500	16
Dallas	4	2	.667	15
St. Louis	1	4	.200	21
Vancouver	1	4	.200	21
Seattle	0	3	.000	20

Pacific Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
La. Lakers	4	1	.833	68
Seattle	4	1	.833	68
Phoenix	3	2	.500	16
Portland	4	2	.667	15
Sacramento	2	3	.333	13
Golden State	0	3	.000	20

Eastern Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	5	1	.833	68
Philadelphia	4	1	.800	67
Boston	1	4	.200	21
New Jersey	0	3	.000	20
Atlanta	0	3	.000	20

Atlantic Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	7	0	.100	68
Detroit	4	1	.800	67
Philadelphia	4	1	.800	67
Cleveland	4	1	.800	67
Baltimore	3	2	.500	66
Atlanta	3	2	.500	66

NFC West Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	5	1	.833	68
San Francisco	4	1	.800	67
Arizona	3	2	.500	66
Carolina	3	2	.500	66
San Francisco	2	3	.333	13
Seattle	0	3	.000	20

NFC East Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	5	1	.833	68
Philadelphia	4	1	.800	67
Carolina	3	2	.500	66
Washington	3	2	.500	66
Atlanta	2	3	.333	13
Philadelphia	0	3	.000	20

NFC South Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	5	1	.833	68
Carolina	4	1	.800	67
Green Bay	3	2	.500	66
Atlanta	2	3	.333	13
Carolina	0	3	.000	20

NFC North Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Green Bay	5	1	.833	68
Minnesota	4	1	.800	67
Green Bay	3	2	.500	66
Minnesota	2	3	.333	13
Green Bay	0	3	.000	20

58; Pakistan 193 or 2 for 164 overs; Stated by eight sides.

TOUR MATCH

(Cheetah, 1st, 2nd day of three); South Africa 243 and 233; Kenya 115 and 117; South Africa won by 244.

Football

Stevenage Borough, the Vaughan Conference champions, have been charged by the Football Association with bringing the game into disrepute. The charges relate to comments made by Victor Green, the chairman, during his unsuccessful bid to become a founder member of the new National Football League. Stevenage were denied promotion to the League because they did not meet its ground requirements last season.

Birmingham City have escaped the threat of possible ground closure following an independent inquiry held on 21 September 23. The Football Association are to take no further action. Alan Jones, the Birmingham secretary, said: "We are happy with the FA decision but we do not see it as a soft option. We are aware that we are intent on finding a positive solution and believe we will be taking the strongest action."

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP AND NATIONAL-WIDE LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION SUSPENDED

Leicester and Nottingham Forest (Notts) have been suspended from the FA Carling Premiership and the National-Wide League First Division pending a review of the clubs' financial management.

FA CUP

South Africa 243 and 233; Kenya 115 and 117; South Africa won by 244.

FA CUP

South Africa 24

Swimming's dreamer
Guy Hodgson meets the man who expects to give Britain gold, page 24

Sport

The worst team in Britain
Keith Elliott speaks to the manager of the Stanford Arms, page 22

Juninho denies transfer rumours

Football

NICK DUXBURY

Juninho yesterday reassured Middlesbrough that he has no plans to leave Teesside, despite being quoted at length in Italian newspapers that he favoured a future in Milan or Turin.

"I don't know where these stories have come from about me leaving the club," the Brazilian striker said. "I am happy at Middlesbrough and I am pleased with the way things are going. The rumours are not true."

Earlier Middlesbrough supporters had to rely on an agent's soothing words that Juninho's departure was mere speculation and that his fellow-countryman, Emerson, was not about to quit either.

The Italian press had Juninho pouring scorn on English football and saying that he wanted a move to Serie A only a week after Emerson was also reported to be ready to leave the Premiership.

The situation will remain uncertain until they report back after the Premiership break tomorrow to prepare for Saturday's game at Derby County.

Juninho, signed last season from São Paulo for £4.75m, was quoted in the Italian press as saying: "I believe my best prospects lie with Inter Milan. I could also be a success with AC Milan or Juventus. The real problem with much of English football is its structure. Even the tiniest of clubs in Italy are better organised than those in England."

Hardly endearing stuff for Riversiders, but agent Gianni Paladini, who represents both players, was dismissive. "It's all speculation. I promise you. They [Juninho and Emerson] are world-class stars and you always get this kind of speculation. Because the trouble with Emerson has occurred, everyone is trying to pick up on how the players Middlesbrough have got are doing. Juninho never spoke to a paper."

However, Emerson will face his manager Bryan Robson when he returns from holiday.

in Brazil, where the stories about his wanting to leave began. The midfielder cannot play against Derby because he is starting a three-match ban.

The Leeds manager George Graham has confirmed that he is interested in signing the Swiss international Ramon Vega, but it is "a long way from any deal".

The 23-year-old centre-half would cost upwards of £3m from the Italian club Cagliari. "I'm interested in any quality players that become available, especially defenders. Vega falls into that category," said Graham, who has also been linked with Barcelona's Miguel Angel Nadal.

The Leeds wage bill will experience a substantial cut should Tomas Brodin complete his return to Italy with Sampdoria. The 26-year-old Swedish striker is negotiating a loan contract until the end of the season with a view to a permanent move.

Leeds, who bought Brodin for £4.5m from Parma a year ago, threatened legal action over his refusal to report back at Elland Road when his loan spell ended at FC Zurich.

John Aldridge has retired from international football to concentrate on his job as player-manager of First Division Tranmere Rovers.

Aldridge revealed his decision to the Republic of Ireland manager Mick McCarthy after being forced to sit on the substitutes' bench throughout Sunday's goalless World Cup qualifier with Iceland in Dublin.

The 38-year-old striker was hoping to score the goal which would have equalled Frank Stahle's all-time Republic record of 20 goals.

David Hodgson, the former Middlesbrough and Liverpool striker, has returned to manage Third Division Darlington for the second time. Hodgson is back at Feethams almost a year after he walked out on a matter of principle, leaving Jim Platt in charge. Platt was sacked on Sunday six months after taking Darlington to the play-offs at Wembley. Hodgson is expected to appoint Gary Bannister as his second in command.

However, Emerson will face his manager Bryan Robson when he returns from holiday.

More football, page 22



Jeremy Bates on his way to victory against David Draper in the first round at Telford yesterday

Photograph: Gary Prior/Alsport

Henman eases through

Tennis

DERRICK WHYTE
reports from Telford

Tim Henman, the defending champion, took just 56 minutes to win his opening match at the Guardian Direct British National Championships in Telford yesterday, beating qualifier Gregg Safary of Berkshire 6-4, 6-2 in the first round.

The 22-year-old British No 1 said: "I'm a lot better player than I was a year ago. I can dominate a lot more with my service and that is very important on the ATP Tour. I'm also much better confidence-wise and experience-wise."

"I have had so many good moments this year and as the season is coming to a close you have time to reflect on them. Everything happened so much quicker than I expected."

"At the start of the year I was hoping to get into the top 50 and I knew it would be tough to achieve. But to break into the top 30 is very satisfying. I made six semi-finals this year and that makes it very exciting for next year. Now I have to try and do even better."

Henman was not expected to win the national title last year when Greg Rusedski was then Britain's top player. Rusedski won the first set in the final but Henman hit back strongly to take the last two sets. This year Henman is the undoubtedly favourite though Rusedski, who did not play yesterday, has been in superb form in the past few weeks. Henman revealed after his match with Safary that he intends to play doubles next year with Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands.

Jeremy Bates, six-times champion but playing this year "only for fun", was serious enough to beat David Draper, the Northamptonshire left-hander 6-4, 6-4 in his first-round match.

Bates has played only one tournament since Wimbledon when he retired from the ATP Tour. "That was an over-35 tournament in Germany," he explained. "and I won it. I'm not 35 until next June but for some reason I didn't understand I was eligible to play in Germany after 1 October and it was won."

This, however, is my last appearance in the Nationals. It's a one-off. I have no aspirations this week but I thought I would like to play just once more because it is such a good tournament."

Bates, however, could win one title for him by playing doubles with Henman, with whom he won the event last year. Henman was expected to play with Neil Broad after their Olympic success but Broad was not available. "I'm asked me to play," Bates said. "I thought he was joking but it's good that he supports both singles and doubles."

In the women's singles the big shock was Lorna Woodroffe's 6-4, 6-4 victory over the second seed Rachel Violette, the British No 2, in the first round. Woodroffe, 20, broke in the first game to take the first set and then led 5-1 in the second. Violette made her last stand by winning three successive games before the Surrey player took the 10th game for victory. Earlier Abigail Tordoff, the 17-year-old from Kent, led Sam Smith 6-2, 5-4 before the top seed from Essex fought back to win 2-6, 7-5, 6-3.

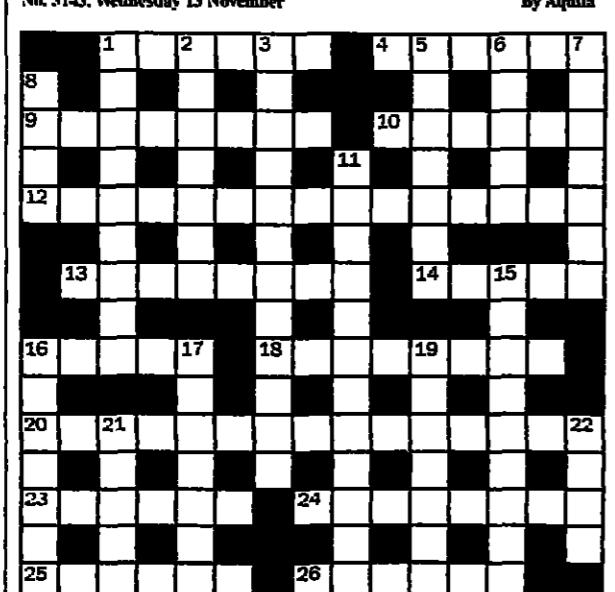
Results, Digest, page 25

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3143, Wednesday 13 November

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Calm quarter day (6)
4 Imperious clan-leader in tartan (6)
9 Retired bloke fit, yet may be called up (8)
10 Defender taught to stand by (4)
12 Delivery breakdown (7,8)
13 Girls' idiosyncrasy to be absent-minded (8)
14 One in diplomacy is understood (5)
16 Bundle of flowers a fellow presented to Aysha (5)
18 Evocative note heard in chasing (8)
20 Weep bitterly over youth on terraces (3,4,5,3)
22 The Ring, perhaps, with spare parts? (6)
24 Enquiry agents in bath, say (8)
25 Terminal next to river on brook (6)

26 Gleam of gladiator's leading weapon (6)
DOWN
1 Immaculate, animated minors' leader (4-5)
2 Nobody in Holloway was such a chronicler (7)
3 One on wire loosens athlete's grip (12)
5 Bill, a filier (7)
6 King and ace played in bars (5)
7 Accumulation of silicon held in storehouse (7)
8 Rosemary, say, in embrace of another boy (4)
11 Number of ruminants let loose (12)
15 Study plan of meeting-place (9)
16 Cruise's unusual energy-source (7)
17 Fellow not playing the game in amusement park (7)
19 Provide, at no extra cost, floor at home (5,2)
21 Surrender income?..... (5)
22time to seek job (4)

Collymore cleared by Evans

Stan Collymore will be in Liverpool's first-team squad for tonight's Coca-Cola Cup third-round replay against Charlton Athletic at Anfield, after being cleared of swearing at reporters during a reserve team match.

Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, said yesterday: "He will be in the squad. Stan Collymore is an important member of our set-up."

Evans also issued a statement after investigating allegations that the £8.5m striker had screamed abuse at reporters after scoring a goal during Saturday's reserve-team game. The comments were said to have been overheard by children.

Last week Liverpool fined Collymore £20,000 after failing to appear for a reserve match last Wednesday.

"After talking with people present, including supporters, the club have decided no action needs to be taken. That is the end of the matter," Evans said.

"I'm not saying anything else as I don't want to make any more noise for the newspapers."

Arsène Wenger, still smarting at having to deny rumours last week that he was about to quit Arsenal, yesterday cancelled his usual pre-match press conference.

Wenger, whose team are on Coca-Cola Cup reply duty

against Stoke City at Highbury tonight, has been the subject of unfounded rumours about his private life.

"I know who I am and what I am trying to achieve," the Frenchman said. "At the moment I just want to be left to get on with that."

An Arsenal spokesman said:

"Mr Wenger is still very angry. What he is doing amounts to putting the press in the sin-bin for a period of time."

Wenger will end his protest after the Stoke game and relations with the media should be back to normal for Saturday's Premiership match at Manchester United.

Mountain men take to the field

Andorra might not have a currency or even a head of state to call its own, but from today it has a national football team to cheer on. The tiny mountainous country, sandwiched into a Pyrenean valley between France and Spain, is famous for ski slopes and duty-free shopping but when 11 Andorrans take to the field against Estonia they will also be known as the world's youngest footballing nation.

However, the chances of an upset in today's friendly are slim – the country has no professional league and fewer than 300 registered players. And the side sounds more like a jury than a team, consisting of bank clerks, civil servants, accountants, salesmen, construction workers, a lift repairman, an electrician and a hotel manager.

Nevertheless the game has generated enormous interest

James Corrigan looks at the world's newest footballing nation: Andorra

amongst the 64,000 inhabitants of Andorra, of whom only 19,000 are actually Andorrans.

"There is a lot of euphoria, a lot of expectation," said David Carpa, the general secretary of the Andorra Football Federation, who anticipates a full house of 1,000 spectators.

About half the population is Spanish, while there are also sizeable Portuguese and French communities in a country where most people speak both Spanish and French in addition to the native Catalan tongue. The country is already finding about international football the hard way as they are not allowed to

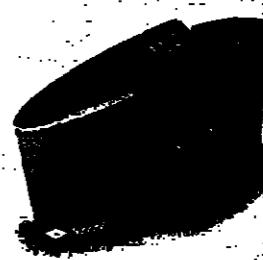
absorb players from FC Andorra, which is largely composed of Spaniards and plays in the Spanish Third Division. Twenty five years' residence is necessary for naturalisation and double nationality is prohibited.

One FC Andorra player, Félix Alvarez, is awaiting permission from Fifa to play with a temporary passport after marrying a local girl, and the former Barcelona striker Julio Lucendo is in a similar position.

Financial restraints also threaten to hamper the rise of Andorra. The federation has an annual budget of only eight million pesetas (£40,000), but Carpa is undaunted. "Look what the Faroe Isles have done," he said. "This will really help the country. If it's like this before we play Estonia, imagine what it would be like if England or West Germany came."

MORSE

It's a Computer (But not as we know it).



This is a JavaStation. It's a thin client – the kind of machine that visionary companies like Sun Microsystems believe represents the future of corporate desktop computing.

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